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From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

WELCOME TO "GOSPEL MUSIC WEEK!"

I hope GMA is as cool as SXSW was this year. The annual music convention thing can get old, stifling, and lame really quick. Who wants to spend all day trying to impress others and one-up someone else that's promoting the rock you love anyway? SXSW is on to a key ingredient - the party. A casual study of Scripture will show a God that likes to party (and I don't mean that in that irreverent *Talladega Nights* prayer scene interrupted by Southern hick a la Cal Naughton Jr kind of way, either)... The God that created man and handed down a set of laws to protect him made sure rest, festivals, and celebrating was scheduled into the mix. When God entered into our time and space as a man, He certainly found himself at many a feast. It kinda flies in the face of the "killjoy" and "old fuddy-dud" tag that God can get accused with, doesn't it? Maybe this year's "GMA Week" will feature a wonderful mix of fun, love, and fellowship. I kinda like the idea of seeing one great musical performance after another. I get inspired when I see the comradery and love between bands at an event like this. I think the common torture they go through on the road creates a bond that fosters love exchange. I'll be stoked if that same kind of interaction can take place between the audience and the artist and the retailer and the media and the suit and blue collars.

Seems like there's a verse somewhere about how pleasant it is when "brothers dwell together in unity." hmmm...

The Skinny Puppy interview turned out to be a great one. After the interview was over, the conversation extended several minutes and it was cool. I hope to print the entirety of that discussion someday, so keep an eye out for it.

SPINNING AT HM NOW

CHRISTAFARI	*To The Foundation*	There's nothing as chill as reggae music.
MEGADETH	*United Abominations*	A metal album based upon Revelation? hmm...
WAVORLY	*Conquering The Fear...*	Hot! Will put Tupelo, MS on the map.
PACIFICO	*Anthology*	A romp down memory lane.
KISS THE GUNNER	*Why Are We So Dead?*	Great trans-genre "riff-groove-Pantera-core."
DECIDING TONIGHT	*The Delusionist*	High energy screamothonic w/great vox.
BEN + VESPER	*All This Could Kill You*	A lil' Danielson-style offbeat-ness...

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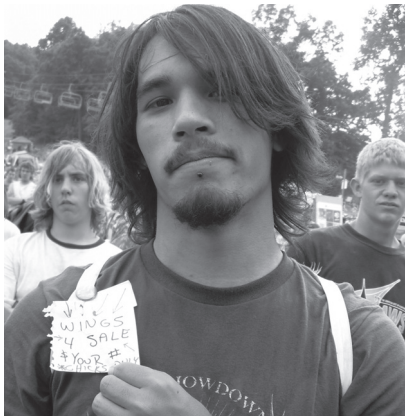

IDENTIFYING AN ANGEL

The "Unknown Pit Angel" (picture on the *HM Hard Music Sampler CD* from the Nov/Dec 2006 issue #122) happens to be my best friend! His name: Andrew Meeuwen; Resides: Flemington, NJ; Hometown: Chicago, IL; Age: 22 on Feb. 5th. The pictures on the front of the demo cd happen to be from Purple Door 2006. I have better pictures to show Andy moshing with the others at Purple Door, which I will gladly attach. Funny part about you folks posting Andy in your magazine is that he actually applied for a job with HM Magazine! He just graduated with a degree in Graphic Design. Andy and I have attended Purple Door the past few years and will also be attending this years as well. Once again, I will be getting angel wings for Andy to wear in the mosh so look out for us!
–John "JJ" McDermott, via internet

HARSH WORDS FOR UNDEROATH

Skillet's been putting out quality stuff for over 10 years now. Let's see where media darlings like Underoath are in 10 years.
–Stephen Elliott, via internet

Ed – Good for Skillet! How about: "Good for Underoath," too? Why the animosity?

HARSH WRITING?

As a former freelance writer for several music magazines, I understand that the reviewer is entitled to his own opinion. I've loved your magazine for many years and, normally, would never comment on this, but I have to say that I wholeheartedly disagree with the comments on Pivitplex's *The King in a Rookery*. I've been a listener of "Christian" music for nearly 20 years and now work in radio. One of the things that I've developed over the years is an ability to sniff out the cheese. I can tell you that, in my experience, this record sounds absolutely nothing like anything I've ever heard on Christian radio. I also had the privilege of bringing Pivitplex to my church and was not embarrassed to have them play for my youth group, most of whom are surprisingly savvy to anything being forced on them as a Christian alternative. Having said this, I still hold to the fact that your reviewer has the right to express his opinion. I would like to ask, however, what's wrong with having a devotional attached to the record? If you look at all the negative influences that bombard our youth daily and the state our world is in, it seems like this should be something to rejoice over as well as something that more bands should think about doing. Also, if criticism is going to be made, at least do the band the favor of mentioning the right song ("It's Our Time" instead of "One Goodbye"). It makes me wonder how closely the reviewer listened.
–David Bumgarner, via internet

Thanks. I agree and was shocked when I got the review. I almost asked the writer to rethink it, but I held back, because I don't tell my writers what to think or write. It was a tough decision. Ultimately, I was stuck with what I had, but harshly failed in my decision to "match" writer and album.

HARSH LYRICS?

I just opened up the latest issue of HM. I must admit I was surprised to see an ad for Beneath the Sky. There is definitely some Christian influence in their lyrics. Actually, there are some great songs dealing with God's grace and sending Jesus to die for our sins. The problem arises though that on a couple of tracks this band has no problem dropping a few 'f' bombs and throwing in a couple 'gd's.' I'm not claiming to be perfect and I am also not judging this band. I just feel that some of your more conservative fans may have major issues when running out and, after purchasing this cd ... and then hearing some surprising language.
–Dennis Minner, via internet

NEW ENGLAND ROCKS

Thank you so much for your excellent review in HM. Blue Duck and After The Sirens were so excited to see it in print and quite possibly have gotten all of our friends to buy every HM mag in the New England area! It is a huge deal for us and the band and we are very grateful for the opportunity. Let us know if we can ever be of assistance down the road and please keep an eye out for ATS and future Blue Duck bands. In His peace,
–Jay, via internet

Ed – Thanks. It's hard to take credit for honestly saying, "These guys' music is good."

HM

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SCRIPTURE "You see this man, and you know him. He put his faith in the Name of Jesus and was made strong. Faith in Jesus made this man completely well while everyone was watching." (Acts 3:16, CEV)

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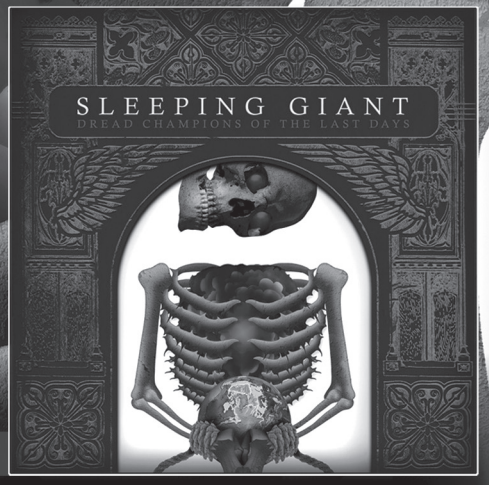

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NODES OF RANVIER
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"This band has been through many ups and downs in its 7-year existence," says Jon Parker. "What started in a cramped room in my parents' basement has grown to international exposure. For a bunch of kids from South Dakota it has been quite a ride and we have achieved more than we ever originally imagined. We could not be any more excited about the opportunity to continue to do what we love with a label that understands what it means to have humble beginnings and achieve big dreams. This band will maintain its neck jerking pace and the material for our upcoming release will reflect our fluent ability to make music that drives this band forward. Nodes' main objective will continue to be to exude the energy on tour, in our live performances and in our records that we have for the love of what we do." Look for their new album in July.

FACEDOWN FEST
HARDCORE CELEBRATION A HUGE SUCCESS

The hardcore label reports that, "Camaraderie among the bands was at an all time high with guest vocals and assorted antics abounding. Sleeping Giant's set saw special vocals from Dave Quiggle as well as Brook from Impending Doom and Eric Gregson of xDeathstarx. Seventh Star's powerful set had guest vocals courtesy of Justin Chaillou of xLooking Forwardx. Inked In Blood covered Cutting Crew's "(I Just) Died In Your Arms Tonight." Bloodlined Calligraphy blew everyone away with their energetic set; new vocalist Ellen Hoffman announced from the stage that the fest, for her, was "a dream come true" and original vocalist Birdman made a special appearance during the BLC set. Jason Moody of NIV lent his talents on War of Ages' set, not that they needed any help blowing the roof off of the Glasshouse that night!" (Photo: Chad Sengstock, ishotphotography.com)

With Blood Comes Cleansing signs to Victory

"We're looking forward to touring as much as possible and delivering a brutal yet positive message to the scene. We would like to share what Christ has done for us through our music. We are excited about joining Victory. We feel that they believe in our music and will push us to a market that we were previously unable to reach. It is an honor to be a part of a label with such an outstanding roster," says guitarist Jeremy Sims. Victory owner Tony Brummel said, "Six of us from the label saw the band play on Feb. 12. We were all sold after the first song. The intensity of their music coupled with their captivating stage presence was riveting to say the least. I did not know that they were a Christian band until after they had played. I have tremendous respect and admiration for all artists that stand behind their message and faith. Music should always be about putting the music and message first. Sales should be an afterthought. When all is said and done did you make an impact on this planet or did you just exist? I believe in these guys because I know that they will make an impact."

News bullets

Point of Recognition reunited for the Facedown Fest.

Demon Hunter can be found on the *X Worship 2007* album, with the song "One Thousand Apologies," alongside artists you'd expect to find, like **Delirious?** and **David Crowder Band**, but also bands like **The Fold**, **Underoath**, **Chasing Victory, Hawk Nelson**, **Falling Up**, **Relient K** and **Future of Forestry**.

As I Lay Dying have been in the studio with KSE guitarist/producer Adam Dutkiewicz recording their new album, which should be out this fall. They will take a short break to play the Bamboozle festival in May and *Warped Tour* after that.

As I Lay Dying is one of many bands featured on the double-disc, *The Best of Taste of Chaos Two*. Joining them is **Zao**, **Emery**, **Norma Jean**, and Underoath.

Many of these same bands are also featured on the triple disc *Take Action Volume 6* compilation. There are songs by Emery, **He Is Legend**, **Paramore**, **Drop Dead, Gorgeous**, **Copeland**. The DVD has videos by Emery, Zao, and Underoath.

Flyleaf celebrates the Gold-selling certification of their self-titled debut album by heading out on its first headlining tour. **Skillet** has been tapped to support the band throughout the tour, along with Dropping Daylight, Resident Hero and others supporting in select markets. Calling it the *Justice & Mercy Tour* holds special significance, since the band is teaming with World Vision to offer fans a limited-edition four-song EP (available exclusively on the road) and a specially designed t-shirt. All proceeds for both items will benefit World Vision.

The Chariot are out on a major tour with labelmates Norma Jean and Ferret Music's A Life Once Lost. The Chariot is also using the Eventful Demand service, letting their fans compete for the bragging rights to the first performance of the new album. Fans from Atlanta outvoted Nashville, Los Angeles, Dayton, Chicago, and Hoboken to see them perform the first CD release show. "We are real excited about the idea of giving

Neon Horse

BY JEFFREY ELLINGER

Neon Horse is a self-proclaimed rock and roll band. Beyond that, you are to know nothing. As of 03/02/07, the day on which this rock writer is composing this very article, you can type in theneonhorse.com (the alleged website for the unit hailing from Southern California) and you will find no information about the newest band on Tooth and Nail's roster. However, you will find a site chalk full of ads dedicated to the supply of equestrian goods and sundry of other services for those in the horse world, like trainers and stables. So with no profile songs to listen to on their myspace page, no real website, and no real biographical information to speak of on the web, I figured I might get some answers from the… well, you know the euphuism I speak of. But, alas my queries to Norman Horse, via Jeff Carver (A&R for Tooth and Nail Records) were fruitless. When I asked him which 20 bands Neon Horse formed out of, he responded with, "the members of the Horse want to focus on the music, besides no one would care, anyway."

All 'aww shucks' aside, would-be fans of Neon Horse will undoubtedly care from whence the Horse came, and all Demon Hunter comparisons aside, the truth will eventually materialize with or without the help of this article. Forgetting the fact that Neon Horse is a faceless entity at this point, the music of Neon Horse is able to be pegged. Entrenched in a nu-garage aesthetic, Neon Horse does an admirable job of mixing the macabre retro tones of Peter Murphy of Bauhaus or maybe Danzig (actually even more specifically it sounds like a darker, histrionic Mark Salomon, but that's just a guess) with one vocalist while the other has the aforementioned snot-nosed garage feel in his pipes. All the while the album flirts with a modern indie vibe a la Clap Your Hands or Wolf Parade, although those themes aren't as prevalent and the record is certainly more *Veni Vidi Vicious* than *Friend and Foe*.

Norman Horse did reveal some of the band's influences as he said that his Dad used to listen to Larry Norman. Although when you are listening to Neon Horse don't expect many straightforward lyrics a la "I Wish We'd All Been Ready." Most of Neon Horse's lyrics are subjective allusions and reference everything from speed to tigers. Norman Horse said this of his lyrical content, "Think of it this way, how many more songs need to be written about breaking up with your girlfriend? The day you hear, 'How could you?' the Horse will cease to exist." And if that doesn't happen before the summer, expect a full-fledged unveiling of Neon Horse as they tour in support of their self-titled album, which will drop on May 8th.

people a voice and letting them have the control over who they want to see and where!" said The Chariot. "We wish something like this was in place years ago." [eventful.com/thechariot]

P.O.D. have signed a new album deal with INO & Columbia Records. The band is in various stages of pre-production and are scheduled to release their new project in late summer with the band's original formation of Sonny, Wuv, Traa, and the recent return of Marcos.

The Almost debut album, *Southern Weather*, will be a joint release between Tooth & Nail and the major label Virgin Records. The Almost will join Say Anything and Saves The Day for a West Coast tour beginning in mid-April, to be followed by an East Coast trek in early May with Paramore. Later this summer, the group will join the majority of the *Vans Warped Tour*. On the road, **Gillespie** leads the band on vocals and guitar and is joined by: **Jay Vilardi** (guitar), **Alex Aponte** (bass) and **Kenny Bozich** (drums).

Following a sold-out Canadian tour and shows in Australia, New Zealand, Europe and Japan on the *Taste of Chaos* international trek, **Underoath** are in the midst of their spring U.S. tour. They will be on the road for a 7-week US tour with Taking Back Sunday and Armor For Sleep. *Define The Great Line* has now been certified Gold. The band also recently returned from Sweden where they shot two new videos with the avant-garde production team PopCore Films, who also directed the group's "Writing On The Walls" clip, which received Grammy and Dove Award nominations for "Best Short Form Music Video." Expect to see the videos for "You're Ever So Inviting" and "A Moment Suspended In Time" later this year in conjunction with their fall headlining tour. After their spring trek, Underoath will return overseas for an international tour in June. In July and August the group will include *Vans Warped Tour* performances in the U.S. before launching their nationwide headlining U.S. tour in September.

Facedown Records has signed **Impending Doom**, from Corona, CA.

HARDNEWS
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The Dark Romantics

BY ADAM NEWTON

Indie rock kids tend to enjoy labeling things, to the point that there are nearly as many niches as there are bands to fill them. So, it's little wonder that upon my first listen-through of *Some Midnight Kissin'*, the new record from The Dark Romantics, I immediately leapt to conclusions – "I deem you dance rock!"

So, when I asked E. Collins, the frontman of The Dark Romantics what he thought of the fence I was putting around them (as in, did they have trouble breaking free of the musical stereotypes that are foisted upon bands like theirs?), I received a firm, yet loving slap on the musical wrist. "We don't care about it (enough) to break free of it," he asserted. "We didn't set out to be dance rock, and our album/music has much more to it than that. It makes you want to dance, which is what all good music does."

Realizing just how correct he was, I sent their songs through my ears a few more times. I began to quickly recognize the quality of the album, one that just happened to be produced by the inestimable Jason Martin of Starflyer 59.

"Jason is an old friend," declared Collins, "and was fantastic to work with. We sent him a bunch of demos of the new stuff we were working on, he dug it, and invited us out to record at his studio in California. We can't wait to go back for our second album."

Thus, when you have a great album that's being strongly backed by your label, the logical progression for a band is to begin to tour heavily. Right? But what happens when the band is made up of guys AND girls? You can't quite share the same dingy room/borrowed living room floor when you're touring. Or can you?

Well, as it happens, The Dark Romantics set me straight once again. Collins explains, "The girls are our wives, so actually it's really easy to tour with them and share rooms. Carla and Amanda are sisters, so Amanda and Dean met through Carla and I dating. We've all been together as friends / family for years now, but now we're making music together. We're not too down with dingy rooms / floors, though we've had our fair share of them."

And since it seems that families who make music together, stay together, The Dark Romantics will be making good music for a while, regardless of the label you might force upon them. Just don't be afraid to shimmy and shake a bit when their record starts playing.

News bullets

Anberlin now has its own channel on YouTube. The band is out on the road supporting its new *Cities* album with Bayside, Meg & Dia and **Jonezetta**.

Before Their Eyes has officially joined the Rise Records roster. The band has scheduled studio time with producer Joey Sturgis (The Devil Wears Prada) to record their debut full-length, which will be in stores in June.

Lovedrug is heading out on the road with Plain White T's. Previous to that, vocalist/guitarist **Michael Shepard** and guitarist **David Owen** headed out for a short *$5 Acoustic Storytellers Tour*, where they were able to preview songs from their sophomore LP, *Everything Starts Where It Ends* in an intimate setting.

Knockout Kings have made a video for the song "All Roads Lead Home," from their sophomore release on Doll House Recordings, *The Kid's Got Heart!*

Mat Kearney, besides touring with **Mute Math** earlier in the year, headlines the *VH1 You Oughtta Know Tour*.

Krystal Meyers is hitting the road with **Superchick** as part of the *Generation Rising Tour* during April and May. Meyers is excited that her song, "Together," from her latest album, *Dying For A Heart*, will continue to be used by NBC throughout 2007 for promotional purposes. Beginning last October, NBC called on the song to be used in promotional efforts behind their hit, drama *Heroes*. The network now has plans to include the song in several DVD releases of their hit primetime shows. The DVDs will be available between September and December of 2007. In addition, Krystal's song will remain a feature on NBC's music website for the rest of the year. "It's humbling and a little overwhelming to turn on the TV and hear my song as part of that show!"

Open Grave Records is releasing **Feast Eternal**'s classic 2000 album, *Prisons of Flesh*. Included are two brand new songs, "Serpents Proclaim" and "Rage of Angels". Look for Feast Eternal's long-awaited follow up album, *With Fire*, in August.

The Canvas Waiting

BY ARIEL PEASE

Austin, Texas has been a hub of musical activity since World War II. For hometown boys The Canvas Waiting, location definitely has its advantages. Since forming in 2003, Nathan Medina (vocals and guitar) and Grant Shirley (guitar), along with Josh Rodgers (drums) and Chris Applegate (bass) have won a local battle of the bands, amassed a loyal fan base, released an album, and played at numerous local and national Indie rock showcases.

In 2005, The Canvas Waiting released their seven-song EP, *In Search of Beginnings*. Re-released in a special limited edition in January, the disc includes four brand new acoustic demos. The title track delivers Medina's deep, emotional vocal performance, and is supported by rock radio-worthy guitar licks. The staccato drum pulses in "Opener" have the Killers-esque vibes that make you want to don some eyeliner and tight pants and dance about the room. "Exit 1028" provides head bobbing pop appeal, and the lyrics from which came the band's name. "It serves as a metaphorical reference to the band, as individuals, waiting for God to shape us as He sees fit," says Medina. With its catchy hooks and easy listening sensibility, the disc appeals to alt-pop (think Jimmy Eat World and Snow Patrol) fans and moms, alike.

Playing annual music festivals like Cornerstone and South by Southwest is a chance for bands to show their stuff. "The kind of exposure that these festivals bring is the type that you hope will get you signed or at least get the attention of people in the business that can help accelerate your career," says Medina. The Canvas Waiting will be featured this month at the South by Southwest and North by Southwest festivals, both held in Texas.

Influenced by singer-songwriters like Patti Griffin, Regina Spektor, Ryan Adams, Bright Eyes, and the Counting Crows, Medina is drawn to the stripped nature of "music that lyrically is very personal and exposed." Like many singer-songwriters, Medina weaves poetic stories into songs from personal experience. From an absent father to losing faith to going away to college, and pursuing a life in music, the stories all contain a little ambiguity, "but I hope that any ambiguity that does exist allows the listener to interject their own life experiences in the gaps and make it their own… The day when my music doesn't evoke something out of someone is the day that I hope I give it up."

News bullets

When **Leeland Mooring** received word that his band received five Dove Award nominations, he remarked, "I thought someone was playing a joke on us. We are so honored to be nominated with so many artists that we have grown up listening to and respect. This is very surreal."

Red is on the road with Sevendust.

Haste The Day's new album, *Pressure The Hinges*, is being released as a single disc and also as part of a *Deluxe Version*, including 3 bonus tracks as well as a bonus DVD disc, including 2 live shows, former vocalist **Jimmy Ryan**'s final performance with the band, 3 past music videos, behind-the-scenes studio footage and a plethora of bonus materials. The band is hitting the road with From Autumn To Ashes.

Anathallo was tapped to play the prestigious Coachella festival.

Klank will be playing a memorial show on the Sanctuary Stage for his recently departed friend, Zach, on June 30 at Cornerstone.

Christafari's new album, *To The Foundation*, is described as their rootsiest effort to date. Recorded with all live instruments, plenty of horns and percussion and various guest vocalists (a veritable who's who of the Gospel Reggae arena), the album moves from roots reggae to lover's rock to dancehall and back again. "I don't strive to make a hit, but a classic," says band leader **Mark Mohr**. "When in the studio, I think, 'How will this sound in ten or twenty years from now?' I want to record music that will endure for decades so that the message of Jesus Christ will continue to bear fruit for generations to come."

Newly signed Crosswalk Records recording artist, **Awake The Suffering**, is hard at work recording material for their first national release. The 10-song concept album, titled *Inside the Mind We Die*, is an attempt to redefine the modern Christian metal scene. Awake the Suffering comes to the table with "brutal sounds, grinding guitar work and guttural female vocals."

HARDNEWS
Page sixteen

Enough Already!

BY JAMIE LEE RAKE

I told you I might be getting a boon to the preservation of your music collection. And, indeed, the CROSLEY SONGWRITER has arrived.

You might already know of Crosley's electronics made to resemble '20s-'60s vintage goods. The Songwriter brilliantly includes a recording CD player. If you still buy and listen to music predating CD dominance – especially Christian label tuneage the re-issues of which you missed or won't ever be on digitized aluminum – the Songwriter is a way to listen to records more often without risking vinyl and tape damage. And shellac; it plays 78's, too.

The unit's needle lacks the dual-tip needle possibly better suited to alternating between other RPM's and antiquated 10-inchers. Even so, for technically and spatially-challenged discophiles, Crosley's Songwriter makes for a one-stop solution to keeping sonic collectibles in top shape. And, here's loving the real wood cabinetry! [CrosleyRadio.com]

We got some music, too...

DOYLE LAWSON & QUICKSILVER's bluegrass has the kind of purity that may have a body mistaking it for sounds from the era Crosley emulates visually. *More Behind The Picture Than The Wall* (Rounder) breaks from their usual gospel wonderfulness, but they still offer a picture of humankind multi-faceted as that seen in Scripture. Heartbreak and romantic longing, regret, the evil of our species, familial nostalgia presented with that traditional picking and vocal harmonies should rack up a few more International Bluegrass Music Association honors for them. The Crosley should like the ending, sounding circa 1938, too. [DoyleLawson.com]

BOOMSHOTS!:
THE BEST OF THE UNDERGROUND [GospelReggae.com] collects 17 gems from the gospel reggae underground from a slew of states and foreign countries. Roots, dancehall, hip hop and dance-flecked bangers, even the odd ballad and a touch of steel guitar, mingle delightfully. Amid a consistently winning compilation, a big-up goes to Buffalo's Oral Roberts for his (pseudo?) name.

EVERLIFE's self-titled longplayer (Buena Vista) isn't their debut. The sister trio came to Disney's attention via their '04 Christian market debut before guesting on the *Hannah Montana* soundtrack, et al. The general market upgrade yields mixed results. Yay for remaking The Romantics and Iggy Pop (kinda'). Boo to so much "Jesus is my boyfriend" glop. With Everlife being House Of Mouse residents now, however, Jesus could be the Hispanic kid down the block they're crushing on. More rocking next time, please. [EverlifeMusicOnline.com], and where'd the Apologetix link on your site go, gals?)

My tastes are all over the place, but you can send saint-made musical goodness to one place: P.O. Box 29; Waupun, WI 53963-0029 USA. And next time, maybe another record deterioration deterrent? We'll see...

News bullets

Rickie Lee Jones' latest album, *The Sermon on Exposition Boulevard*, debuted at #1 on eMusic, the world's largest retailer of independent music and the world's second-largest digital music retailer overall. While in New York City, the two-time Grammy Award winner performed the album's first single, "Falling Up," on the *Late Show With David Letterman*. "People today can't even hear the name Jesus without tensing up, because they don't want to be associated with the TV evangelists and that lot," says Rickie. "I just wanted to level the playing field a bit."

Five Score And Seven Years Ago, the fifth album in seven years from **Relient K**, debuted at #6 on The Billboard 200, and was #3 on iTunes' Top Albums chart for the week ending March 12. This is Relient K's highest debut in both chart number and sales to date. The band is set to perform on "*The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*" on April 12th.

Building 429's new album, *Iris to Iris*, was produced by Brown Bannister (The Afters, Third Day) and mixed by F. Reid Shippen (India.Arie, Johnny Lang). The record is due out May 1.

Evanescence is touring with **Chevelle** and Finger Eleven on the second leg of U.S. dates on their world tour. A third U.S. leg is planned to bring the band to arenas in major markets in the late spring/early summer. Vocalist **Amy Lee** will join Korn for a special performance on the upcoming *MTV Unplugged* special.

Kekal's new album, *The Habit of Fire*, is being distributed by Open Grave Records in the USA.

Ashley Cleveland recently inked a distribution deal with TAG Artist Group, the fourth largest Christian distributor of exclusive product. *Before The Daylight's Shot* hits soon.

Revolution on Canvas, Volume 2: Poetry from the Indie Music Scene features contributions from **Brandon Rike** of **Dead Poetic**, and **He Is Legend**'s **Schuylar Croom**.

Photo by Alexander Yerks

Sherwood

BY MATT CONNER

Sherwood is, without a doubt, one of the most positive pop acts in the mainstream music scene. Whether it's the sunshine artwork on their latest album (the appropriately titled *A Different Light*), the bright harmonies overtop infectious pop-punk melodies or the numerous social justice causes the band supports, Sherwood continues to make the world around them a better place. And their latest album will truly take their sunny disposition to the masses.

The California-based popsters have always pushed the envelope when it comes to making their music available. The band initially picked The Militia Group to release their debut, *Sing, But Keep Going*, and the result was 20,000 units sold. Then, teaming up with Absolute Punk, the band released a free, downloadable EP on *AP*'s website that generated over thirty thousand hits. Summer was an internet sensation both for critics and fans and positioned Sherwood to really make their mark with their next full-length.

That comes in the form of *A Different Light*. This time, the label is none other than MySpace Records, which places Sherwood in front of the largest audience possible. The strategy should pay off for a band that has both something to play and something to say. *Light* finds the band working with producer Lou Giordano (The Goo Goo Dolls, Sunny Day Real Estate) and further developing their Beach Boys-influenced pop/rock sound. "Middle of the Night" and "Alive" serve as great examples of the California rock, while the former features vocalist Nate Henry at his best. His tenor overtop the memorable riffs is a perfect blend. "Home" delivers on a deeper level, with a lyrical emphasis not found on previous efforts.

The new label combined with their spring tour with Relient K and Mae also allows the band to discuss their passion for making the world around them a better place. Sherwood continually encourages their fans to make a difference by being involved with various organizations including World Vision, SaveDarfur.org, and The One Campaign. As one of the brightest spots on the indie map, Sherwood have positioned themselves brilliantly. Their music and message are a necessary combination in the world we live and the band gladly accepts the challenge.

German based Whirlwind Records, the home of **Lengsel**, **Pantokrator** and Kashee Opeiah, amongst other artists has entered into an exclusive distribution deal with Open Grave Records Distribution, making their releases easily available at most major US chain stores as well as independent music stores. The first Whirlwind release to see a US release date will be Lengsel's, *The Kiss The Hope*, which will hit stores on June 5th. Lengsel hails from Oslo, Norway and consists of **Ole Halvard Sveen**, **Tor Glidje**, and **John Robert Mjåland**, all members of the band **Extol**.

Music Industry veteran, **Barry Blair**, announces the launch of Tonecrash Records, a ministry-focused label with the goal of developing and building young independent artists. "I really felt that I have a good sense of what was going on in the independent world of Christian music and could help a few bands to further their ministry. Through Tonecrash, artists will gain access to retail distribution channels and receive radio promotion and other marketing to increase awareness of their music within and outside the Christian community." The label's first signing is **Two Empty Chairs**, a rock foursome from Smackover, Arkansas. The band's national debut, *Brighter Day*, releases in April.

Ken Andrews (Failure, Mae) on producing the debut album by **Future of Forestry**: "I've become a lot more selective about things I choose to produce lately, having focused more on mixing for the last two years, but when I heard the FoF demos, I couldn't resist. The songwriting is just beautiful and quite varied throughout the album with Eric's emotive voice and classic song writing sensibilities pulling it all together. One thing I hate is listening to and working on albums with a lot of filler. I'm proud to say if you like the first song on this album, you'll like the last one and everything in between. These guys should open for U2..."

Eric Volz, the son of **77s**' founding bassist **Jan Eric Volz** was recently sentenced to 30 years in a Nicaraguan prison for a murder he has evidence (that) he had nothing to do with. This distressing situation can be followed at friendsofericvolz.com

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WORKING HARD FOR BANDS

LIVE REPORT

South By Southwest Music Conference

March 14-18

BY DOUG VAN PELT

AUSTIN, TX – To call the talent present and the performances going on at South by Southwest "world class" is an understatement. A better word is just "RIDICULOUS," as it is completely mind-blowing and amazing how you can witness a world-changing performance by one artist, walk next door to another club and see another one that's being performed with that "all or nothing" intensity, grit, and passion. It's a downright wonderful experience to take in. Yes, if you choose poorly you can see one crappy band (of the "trying to get signed when they should really try to find something else to do" variety) right after another, but you can also see nothing but buzz bands and discover why they're moving up charts "with a bullet." Kudos to the musical selection committee, for sure.

This annual five-day massive music party began with the convergence of thousands of people upon this fine city ... and this meant lines for registration pick-up and shows. Over 32 parties kicked into gear with tunes and food, and music was heard in every nook and cranny available within a one or two square mile radius from downtown. What follows is not even close to one man's journey, but just a fly-by of highlights:

Tooth & Nail Records held a showcase at Spiro's on Wednesday night, which was packed with lots of younger-than-usual SXSW attendees. The label makes sure they book their annual event here in an all-ages club, so the fans in and around Austin can check out their bands. **Far-Less**, **The Fold**, Showbread, Anberlin, and **MxPx** rocked this joint good - despite having to wrestle with sound problems like a low vocal mix. This was especially a drag for bands that depend so much on vocals, like **Showbread** with its dualing singers; and **Anberlin**, whose trademark sound is crafted around **Stephen Christian**'s strong throat.

The recently re-united **Smoking Popes** performed down the street under a small awning, with vocalist Josh Caterer sounding exceptionally bright and melodic.

Mute Math put in a couple of strong performances during the week. Their first was in a small club called The Dirty Dog Bar, where they made do with an even smaller stage, making their chaotic behavior seem that much more intense close-up. They followed this with an outdoor performance at the Pure Volume showcase stage, where a lot more people were able to take in their musical joy. The surrounding Austin skyline provided a much more beautiful backdrop than even the fake one on *Austin City Limits* could attempt.

Talk music aficionado **Listener** charmed an indifferent audience in a small Zero Degrees club as part of a hip hop showcase. Culling from an array of influences as varied as *Nebraska*-era Springsteen to Matisyahu or a slowed-down-to-a-talk version of Mat Kearney, this guy stood out. To make an even bigger impression, he took several knives and stabbed them into a chopping block and hawked his wares like a salesman, always opening up the floor for questions.

Pete Stewart reunited with ex-Grammatrain drummer **Paul Roraback** for a small set of spirited rock tunes that ranged from mellow to blues to grunge, capping off the night with a cover of Zeppelin's "Babe, I'm Gonna Leave You," which he owned. **Page France**, **Rosie Thomas** and **Dustin Kensrue** all delivered memorable sets for devoted, animated and thrilled audiences.

While seemingly an endurance test at times, SXSW delivered way beyond expectations. Wow.

Clockwise from top: Page France; Listener; Pete Stewart & the Plastic Saviors; Rosie Thomas & Denison Witmer; Mute Math [Photos by Doug Van Pelt]
For more, go to: hmmag.com

Heaven's Metal

Metal tracks

1

2

3

• As the 3-page feature in this issue will inform, **Virgin Black**[1] is unleashing its 3-album project: *Requiem – Mezzo Foret* (releases April 3); *Requiem – Pianissimo*; and *Requiem – Fortissimo* (the second two coming later in the year).

• In the I-can't-believe-it's-true department, **Bride** vocalist **Dale Thompson** is running for President of the United States of America. God help us all! He's leaning towards the Constitution Party.

• **Holy Soldier**[2] his back in action. They're touring Florida in late April.

• The new issue of *Heaven's Metal Fanzine* (featuring Virgin Black on the cover) is full of retro articles, including **Petra**, **Leviticus**, **Rosanna's Raiders**, as well as reviews of **X-Sinner**, **Zion**, and **Jet Circus**. The big news with Heaven's Metal is that subscribers (only) are going to start receiving a free sampler CD with their copies, thanks to Retroactive Records. The plan is to keep this going.

• On Wednesday, June 27th, the Sanctuary Tent at Cornerstone will host a "Day of Metal" for Bombworks Records with the following bands: **A Hill To Die Upon**; **With Faith or Flames**; **Kibbroth Hattaavah**; **Deus Invictus**; **The Burning Issue**; **Exousia**; **Common Yet Forbidden**; **Dagon**; **Lo-Ruhamah**; **Aletheian**; and **Crimson Moonlight**.

• Bombworks is now releasing full-length albums by Lo-Ruhamah (*The Glory Of God*) and Dagon (*Paranormal Ichthyology*).

• Other metal related music at the Sanctuary Tent at Cornerstone includes: Sanctuary Worship w/ Pastor Bob and **Jim Laverde**; **Fear Not**; **To Laodicea**; **Remembrance**; **The Burial**; **Afterimage**; **Promise Land**; **Rex Carroll Sessions**; **Jesus Joshua24**; **Blissed**; **Wisdoms Call**; **Edens Way**; **Since October**; **Breaking the Silence**; **Seventh Seal**; **Ultimatum**; **End of Destiny**; **DBeality**; **Chris Saub**; **Urijah**; **Our Corpse Destroyed**; **Strangeland**; **Crimson Thorn**; **Aletheian**; and **Klank**.

• Girder Records in conjunction with GirderMusic.com will be re-releasing all 4 **Rob Castles Band** recordings, *Straight Shot*, *Off the Wall*, *Kamikazee Christian*, and the very rare first recording by Rob Cassels, *Evening Pastoral*. Each disc will contain bonus material such as demos, video, live performances and more.

• Watergrave Records is new a division of Retroactive Records, where all releases will be limited edition, budget priced and digitally remastered.

• **Bloodgood**[3] will be playing a set during GMA Week in Nashville (4/22 at Rocketown).

Album reviews

MISERATION – *Their Angels*

The prolific Jani Stefanovic collaborated with Scar Symmetry's talented vocalist Christian Alvestam to create this dark and aggressive mix of thrashy progressive power metal and melodic death metal. Anyone who has had the privilege to hear Scar Symmetry has already experienced the diversity and brutality of Alvestam's singing – he possesses several harsh death tones, a throaty growl and a solid, clean/melodic voice. He comfortably navigates his way through Jani's cacophonous and doomy compositions which are more riff oriented than ever, yet still retain that signature symphonic speed quality. While the final musical product is essentially an amalgam of Divinefire and Gothenburg death metal, a lyrical denouement is less evident. Due to the intense musical conflagration and the heady supernatural narratives of deception, depravity and spiritual warfare – replete with "mindbender" terms like "Noctivagant" and "invective" – you might want to listen to this with two aspirin in one hand and a dictionary in the other. Miseration, commiseration, indeed! *[Rivel] Jonathan Swank*

Classic Moments in Christian Rock history

BY DOUG VAN PELT

[2000-2003]. In an otherwise out-of-the-way place called Birmingham, Alabama, a young skate/music shop owner named Chad Johnson put on a ground-breaking festival known as Furnace Fest. What was unusual at the time was that this festival booked mainstream (i.e. "secular") bands right alongside many Christian hard music bands. 1,500 kids attended the final Furnace Fest in 2002, but attendance numbers don't touch the possibly prophetic impact this one event had on our music scene. A cursory glance today in any direction at the Christian hard music scene (with any number of tour packages or rock magazines including several Christian bands) will show that it's "gone mainstream" in the simple sense of artists taking their idea to the "marketplace of ideas," and having their idea – their music – stand or fall based on its quality alone. One could say that Christian hard music has "come of age," like a minor league baseball player "graduating" to the Major League. Maybe no one knew it at the time, but this little festival may have played a huge role in changing the way bands in this scene perceive their art and/or their ability to play their music on exactly the same stages as their non-religious counterparts. Zao (pictured above) played alongside Dillinger Escape Plan; mewithoutYou (above right) played on the same bill as Andrew WK; and Stretch Arm Strong (lower right) played a set after Hatebreed and Shai Hulud. [Photos by Sarah Day & Lonny Hurley]

THE INNOCENCE MISSION

BY DAN MACINTOSH

The Innocence Mission's latest CD, *We Walked in Song*, is traveling music saturated in quiet joy. Although Karen Peris' songs can sometimes border on the melancholy, her guitarist/husband Don Peris consistently adds touches of instrumental beauty – even to her lyrical sadness. Yet overall, this project finds the group sounding contented in its mission.

The term "brotherhood of man" appears in the song "Colors of the World," and then again in a track with the title "Brotherhood of Man." These three words express something mysterious that occurs when humans mature from childhood to adulthood. People who do not share the same last name somehow become dear to each other, as though they were flesh and blood relatives, and exemplify the brotherhood of mankind. Karen Peris is even reminded of this kinship when she feels an immediate closeness with absolute strangers and cannot explain why.

"There's a feeling of connectedness to other people and a feeling of family in a larger sense," Karen Peris explains. "And it's been even more important to me since my mom and dad passed away, which happened in the past few years. I think it's comforting, especially now, to dwell on that connectedness to other people. I just wanted a chance to write about just those everyday moments that come along that seem almost like a gift in a way; of meeting people and feeling an awareness of connectedness. Even maybe traveling away from home and meeting someone in an airport and feeling a sense of family with strangers. I know it's something that everyone has experienced at different times."

The Innocence Mission sometimes comes off like a band out of time. Its quiet sounds contrast strikingly with the oftentimes ear-blasting music omnipresent in contemporary culture. One of the new album's songs, "Into Brooklyn, Early in the Morning," is quite similar to The Velvet Underground. But it's not like Lou Reed when he is detailing a drug score in full rock power on "I'm Waiting for My Man." Instead, it brings to mind the gentle beauty of something like "Sunday Morning."

"I really love some of those recordings," Peris says. "I know I'm not familiar with all the albums. We've really enjoyed a lot of their recordings over the past few years. I didn't think about that myself in connection with that song, but that's kind of nice to hear."

It is impossible to miss the obvious familial atmosphere created by The Innocence Mission. In addition to Don and Karen being husband and wife, one new song ("Happy Birthday") is dedicated to their daughter, Anne, and "Love That Boy" is dedicated to their son Drew. Still, Karen is not certain her children are fully aware of what mommy and daddy do for a living. "We don't talk about what we do a whole lot," she says. "We talk about music, because they love music and we sing and play songs with them a lot. They love to sing. They're always singing around the house and playing at the piano. They hear me singing around the house and they hear me working on songs."

The Innocence Mission may not have the same high profile it enjoyed while on the major label A&M Records in the '80s, but it continues to release new CDs every few years or so, whether the wider pop music world cares to notice or not. But to borrow the title of its latest album, these players will always walk in song.

"It's something that we love to do," Peris says simply. "And I think that whether or not we would have the opportunity to share them with other people, we would still be writing. Because it is something we have never stopped enjoying and feeling a need for. We are grateful for the opportunity to be able share the songs with other people."

theinnocencemission.com

We don't have to say it

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WIDOWS & ORPHANS

BY KELLY BENSON

Recently, I had the chance to chat with Widows&Orphans vocalist Micheal Foulk online. It's an exciting time for the band as the release of their first full length, *Everything Is Gold*, marks the switch from Doll House Records to Blood & Ink Records (The Gentleman Homicide, xLooking Forwardx) and Seamless Talent Agency (Kittie, Destroy The Runner). Armed with emoticons to make up for the lack of vocal inflection, I asked Micheal about the band's purpose.

Well, for me a lot of it has to do with making something important … I hope the band can make people think about life and God and themselves in new ways. Really, I guess it's about just doing what we love to do with our best friends … the message is usually up to the listener. Rarely do we ever say, "This is exactly what we mean, no questions, this is how it is".

Yeah, I noticed while listening to *Everything Is Gold* that the lyrics tend to be a bit abstract at times. Would you say your writing is influenced by personal experiences or is it more commentary?

Um, yeah, a lot of it is from personal experience. Of course, some of it is complete fiction or metaphor, such as "I Kissed My Sweetheart." The song tells the story of a senator with strong morals getting sucked up in the rush of the political game and starting an affair with a prostitute. I have never been a senator or had an affair with a prostitute. I just like to use extreme stories to bring about a bigger picture.

With some songs dating back five years, do you view *Everything Is Gold* as a cohesive piece or just a sampling of the band's history together?

Everything Is Gold is both, I think. Putting everything together like we did ended up working well, much to our surprise. The album and the songs are both about looking through life and seeing that things aren't that bad. Being alive and existing is gold. It was also a way to say goodbye to The Kirby (the band's former name) for good. It was like pulling teeth trying to be our own thing. So, it became a way of saying we love it all, but we're on to new things that we hope will be better. I have such a hard time answering this question. Ha-ha.

Well, I've heard the first sign to a good interviewer is to stump the interviewee (I just made that up).

Ha-ha, nice. You're the pro.

Tell me about the transition between Doll House and Blood & Ink Records. What does this mean for the band?

We haven't really had a chance to feel the perks of the switch yet, but it is really exciting. We love Dollhouse, but at this point it had taken us as far as it could. It's sort of like Dollhouse was your parents' house. It's great, but someday you have to move out. Blood & Ink will open a lot of doors for us. Tours, production values, publicity… There's so much we want to do when we get to have a record to create ourselves with no back stock. We have a lot of cool ideas in play right now and I think the album is going to have a lot of darkness to it, maybe get a little creepy with some of the ideas. But I don't want to ruin it for you.

Yeah, you have to be careful what you say. I'll tell everyone (that reads HM). Okay. Let's get serious here. Now that you've signed with Seamless Talent Agency, how likely is it that you will be touring with Kittie? And, on a scale of 1-10, how excited are you to possibly tour with Kittie? Ten being the highest.

I'm excited to 11.

Is that a Spinal Tap reference?

Always. Now who's the pro?

I'm pretty sure it's still me.

widows-and-orphans.com

Touring with cats

RETROACTIVE RECORDS

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DELIVERANCE - GREETINGS OF DEATH, ETC.
DELIVERANCE -THE FIRST FOUR YEARS
Both are Limited Edition reissues of early thrash demos from one of Christian metal's most prolific metal bands. Remastered, enhanced and new artwork!!!

DELIVERANCE - ASSIMILATION (Special Edition) This remastered reissue contains a bonus CD of the 10 previously unreleased demos from the Assimilation recordings, making this a 2 CD set! This is brilliant, progressive metal made readily available once again!

DELIVERANCE - AS ABOVE~SO BELOW
Few groups have ever blended epic thrash / speed metal with the elegance and beauty of progressive metal (later period Deliverance) with such devastating skill and brutality. Alternating so many moments of beauty with beastly moments of metallic fury and spine snapping riffs that would seem right at home on a Slayer, Believer, or early Deliverance album.

REV SEVEN - VOLUME 1 (two albums on one CD, 20 songs)
REV SEVEN - VOLUME 2 (two albums on one CD, 20 songs)
Guitarist, Bill Menchen (Titanic, Final Axe, Seventh Power) re-recorded all the songs from his legendary unreleased demo session with his band from the early 90's. No one does an Ozzy and Black Sabbath impersonation better than Rev Seven!

REDEEMER - ANNO DOMINI ('84-89)
REDEEMER - DOUBLE EDGED SWORD ('84-89)
Re-recorded unreleased songs from one of Bill Menchen's first bands.
This is classic metal from a band that wore their love of melodic metal as a badge of honor!

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LOVEDRUG

Photo: David Johnson

BY MATT CONNER

For Michael Shepard, the lead singer and primary songwriter for Lovedrug, the title is appropriate. *Everything Starts Where It Ends* is both the name for the band's sophomore release and the personal theme he has found himself working through.

"That song, and why it became the title of the record, kind of sums up the overall mantra of the album," explains Shepard from a cell phone on the road. "The subject is essentially that you can do a lot of different things and can react in many ways and choose a lot of different paths to take, but I have found, at least, regardless of those decisions, everything always comes full circle. Everything does start where it ends. You do end up where you begin."

Lovedrug, as a band, is also finding that to be true as well. After signing with The Militia Group and releasing the very successful *Pretend You're Alive*, the band attracted the attention of major labels everywhere and soon signed with Columbia Records. But a series of unfortunate events found the band out of a contract and looking for a new home.

"When we signed with Columbia Records, all the folks over there that we were working with and speaking with were really cool people," says Shepard. "And they were all really jazzed up about this new record. They were excited to promote it, excited to put some money behind it and just blow it open."

"What happened, and what happens a lot of times unfortunately at the larger labels, is they have a high turnover rate. People don't keep their jobs very long. It's not like an independent company, or an independent label for that matter, where people who start these labels stay there their entire lives or they hire their friends and their friends work for them very hard."

"What happened to us is that a lot of those people we were working with ended up leaving or getting fired," continues Shepard. "It was simply a matter of self-preservation for our record. We went in there and we were fearing the inevitable, which was the record getting lost in the shuffle. All these new people were coming in to work and whatnot. They don't know who Lovedrug is because it's a huge label."

But getting back out of the contract was much easier than expected. "We had our manager go in there and talk to the President and he was very nice and said, 'We're not here to stand in the way of anybody's career as a band and we love what you're doing. So please take your record, go and find somebody who will put it out and have a good time.'"

So the band ended up "free agents," as Shepard describes it, shopping the new song to interested parties and Lovedrug soon found themselves right back where they started: The Militia Group.

"We decided to go with The Militia Group because they're good friends of ours," Shepard explains. "They're familiar and they do a great job. They bend over backwards for all their bands. And honestly, it seemed the best decision business-wise, which is something you always have to keep in mind."

Shepard notes the sound on *Everything Starts* will be familiar for Lovedrug fans with an increasing height and depth to everything. "The difference between that record and this record about to come out is there still are some of those elements – those abject elements of cringing sadness or dealing with those issues. But there are also high points, too. The high points are a lot higher and the low points are a lot lower. I feel each song has a more individual personality."

It seems ending up where you started isn't always a bad thing, especially if it was where you found so much success the first time.

lovedrugmusic.com

A series of unfortunate events

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BETWEEN THE TREES

BY MARK FISHER

You know, I have to be honest here and say that I don't always enjoy talking to young bands. The longer I do this the more I find that many bands out there today simply have nothing to say. They don't stand for anything. Between the Trees, however is a brother from a different mother, offering the power of positivity at every turn. Not bad for a first try.

Despite a bad connection caused by either my phone or the fact that the band was driving while talking, vocalist/guitarist Ryan Kirkland engaged me immediately with his personal and honest answers to my questions. Between the Trees has begun to make waves and – with the national release of their debut album, *The Story and the Song* – we're about to see what kind of staying power this band has.

"We always pray before shows but we don't pray that the crowd gets saved or that the crowd is huge or anything like that," begins lead vocalist/guitarist Ryan Kirkland when asked about "The Forward," the anthem that announces the arrival of their debut. This is an undeniably risky position to take when large numbers of Christians know where you stand in your faith and may be buying your album for no reason other than that. As the conversation goes on, though, the statement becomes even more powerful as Kirkland seems oblivious to the fact that many potential fans may be put off by the band's position. Continuing, he explains, "We pray that the crowd can get what they need to get from it and that we can be people that they can talk to or that we can just love them in some way." Within that simple statement lies a maturity that Christian music could use a whole lot more of in the here and now. While the band's slick powerful pop rock sound may be easy on the ears, the yarns they spin speak to a generation in an understanding way instead of a judgmental one. Although not evangelists in the commonly accepted sense, Kirkland realizes that the band can have more of an impact after the show than during it.

"I really hope people enjoy the album," begins Kirkland, "but I also hope people can relate to it in some way and that they will pass it along to another person who might relate to it." You can hear the empathy in Kirkland's voice, conveying an interest in meeting people where they are, a fact that the band's touring schedule reinforces. This is the type of band that fans easily connect to, because the band works hard to make those connections. Simply put, they actually care.

Uplifting and catchy music aside, the band's connection to an organization called To Write Love on Her Arms (twloha.com) may be their most endearing quality (no offense intended). The organization helps fund rehab for those in need and Between the Trees has been involved since the beginning as TWLOHA's founder, Jamie Tworkowski, and Kirkland were mutual friends of the girl the organization set out to help at its inception. "We are totally about what TWLOHA stands for, which is helping those that struggle with addictions like alcohol, drugs, cutting and things like that," states Kirkland, "We want to do whatever we can to help."

There's a good chance that Between the Trees could be the next prize fighter (the current one being Relient K). Their likeable combination of pop rock energy and uplifting messages has been done before, to be certain; but rarely with humility and empathy, both of which abound in Between the Trees.

betweenthetrees.net

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ALL STAR UNITED

BY AMY E. HALL

I always wondered what producer/songwriter/solo artist/All Star United frontman Ian Eskelin was like. I had been familiar with his early solo work and other collaborative projects (though not previously aware that he enjoyed a short stint as the Newsboys' keyboardist). It was great fun to see All Star United's first tour and follow the band's career. Over the last many years, I learned of Eskelin's acclaimed work as a producer and songwriter for other artists – most recently generating a nomination for GMA's producer of the year. But what was this clever guy like stripped away from his band and board?

From my brief visit with him at a coffee shop in Franklin, Tennessee, I got the feeling that he is quite a bit like his band ASU – creative and perhaps a little ADD. We got together to talk about ASU's latest record, *Love and Radiation*, scheduled to hit shelves on May 29. I learned random, little-known facts like: 1) The Tigers was ASU's back-up name, when Reunion Records initially discouraged the moniker All Star United; 2) the name All Star United was birthed out of Eskelin's fierce affinity for international soccer; and 3) he starts a new song by selecting a title first.

He breezed into It's a Grind after a late night finishing up a week-long session producing eleventyseven's sophomore album. Like ASU's music, my interview with Eskelin was fast and furious, fueled by his anxious energy to move on to the next "song" – which just happened to be packing up his family's belongings in preparation for an upcoming move. He's definitely one to keep things moving.

"I'm … a total fan of a three-minute, simple, catchy, pop [tune]…" confesses the frontman. "It's very rare that I write a song that reaches three minutes."

Love and Radiation does not stray from ASU's classic Brit-pop/rock sound. According to Eskelin, the new album, which was released internationally last summer, has been compared to the band's freshman, self-titled release.

ASU's trademark sound is based in Eskelin's heritage, as his mother is from England. "We spent many, many summers, when I was growing up, in England," he recounts. Eskelin's European experience exposed him to British pop/rock early on. "…every little petrol station… would sell these cassettes … and I remember buying all this early Brit-pop and Brit-rock at the gas stations and stuff."

As ASU's chief songwriter, Eskelin brings witty, tongue-in-cheek lyrics into the mix, as evidenced by new titles: "Jesus on the Radio," "The Song of the Year," and "In a World Where Nothing's Wrong (You're Alright)." "Most of the things I do lyrically in All Star United is social commentary and, you know, when you're thinking about our lives and our crazy existence here on earth, you almost have to look at it with a little bit of humor, because we get ourselves into some real messes."

ASU serves as Eskelin's chance to shed his musical mentor coat and transform into the wacky wizard that ASU fans know and love. Though he loves working with other artists, "… one of the great passions of my life has always been writing my own music and, hence, that's why I collected a group of 11 songs and called all my All Star United, you know, friends on the bat phone and said, 'Get over to the studio immediately!'" he explains. "All Star United is one of those projects for me that I … crave … because nobody in their right mind's ever gonna cut some of the songs that I get to put on All Star United records."

A new deal with Indiana-based indie label 7 Spin Music will allow Eskelin & Co. to be as witty and prolific as they want to be. "As the Ian Eskelin of All Star United, that's kind of like my … alter ego clone," he confesses. "I get to get away with a lot with All Star United."

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DEAS VAIL

BY SAM FARRIES

Life is an awkward journey that can be difficult to navigate. With every journey, there is always a destination; a place that we desire to go, a place where we will be happy, fulfilled or accepted. There are many twists and turns along the way, some good some bad. As Oasis sang, " all the roads that we have to walk along are winding, and all the lights that lead us there are blinding." Insert your own song or mantra of how to keep your head while navigating life's journey here. To get where we want to go usually requires blood, sweat, and tears. This uncomfortable and painful process is nothing new to Deas Vail. Out of Russellville, AR, this five-piece band has forged themselves musically and personally through their blend of delicate melodies contrasted against indie-rock driven textures and atmospheres. As singer Wes Blaylock puts it, "Our music is a lesson learned with every song." But with every story of self-discovery, growing pains must be endured.

Rewind back to 2003 when all the members (save bassist Jonathan Childs) met at Arkansas Tech University. Back then, Deas Vail (Deas being misspelled Latin for 'God' and Vail being French for 'humble servant') was just an outlet for creative energies and not an initial career ambition. It wasn't until a year later in the summer of 2005 that the creative fun turned serious as future label-mates The Wedding passed along accolades of the band's sound to producer Mark Townsend (Relient K). After a visit to a Little Rock show, Townsend invited Deas Vail to demo songs in his Nashville studio. However, at this point, their own musical identity was still yet unsettled. "We were still trying to find ourselves musically when we began writing this record. It is hard to determine when you actually attain 'your style' if you are simply trying to produce what you like to hear or what you consider creative, good music." Out of sessions with Townsend came the four-song *Collapse* EP that was released at Cornerstone '06 to the ever-growing Deas Vail fanbase. The EP would jointly serve as a taste of things to come while garnering momentum and anticipation for their first full-length album, *All The Houses Look The Same*. As Deas Vail was set to unleash their brand of melodic mastery, a change in label ownership and structure pushed back the release date to early March. This only gave more time for the band to record a few more tracks to eventually add to the project.

Fast forward to present day. With the record done, Wes can clearly reflect on the record and everything that went into it. "In its entirety, this record is about hope and restoration within a sinister world full of difficult and heartbreaking situations," he states. However, themes and messages aren't apparent during the Deas Vail writing process. "Lyrically, our songs don't always have a purpose until they are finished. For me, many of these songs don't make sense until after they are done and then the songs' meanings are always subject to change." Though a Deas Vail song is up to personal interpretation, Wes gives us some insight into what *All The Houses Look The Same* has meant for the band. "The record is in some ways about us growing up or about changes that come about in us and in others around us." The journey to self-discovery for Deas Vail is over and yet in some respects, has just begun. Any lessons that were learned so far have only brightened their future.

deasvail.com

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Tyrone Wells
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO SLY?

BY DAN MACINTOSH

THE LANKY, SHINY-HEADED TYRONE WELLS IS BEST KNOWN FOR HIS ROLE WITH THE BAND SKYPARK. BUT *HOLD ON* REPRESENTS WELLS' MAJOR LABEL SOLO DEBUT. AND THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FRONTING A BAND AND BEING A SINGULAR ARTIST. "THE CAMARADERIE, I MISS THAT," HE SAYS. "BUT IT'S BEEN NICE TO KIND OF BE THE DECISION MAKER. I'VE ENJOYED THAT FREEDOM."

While Skypark was a popular alternative rock band, *Hold On* finds Wells dipping more deeply into soul music. "It's definitely the direction I've been moving in," Wells explains. "I really dig Stevie Wonder. I listen to all that Otis Redding and Ray Charles. But I really love current day artists. I love Ray LaMontagne. And then stuff that's got soul, but a different kind of soul like Damien Rice. I think John Mayer put out a great record with his last record."

Although some hear a Lenny Kravitz vibe running through Wells' music, he cannot catch these similarities. "I guess I've heard the Lenny Kravitz (comparison) a couple of times, where they thought I sounded like Lenny Kravitz," he admits. "But they just have to listen a little deeper to the record and they'd realize they were off."

With his obviously eclectic tastes, it should come as no surprise that Wells often slips a few fascinating covers into his live sets now and again. "I love covering "Ain't No Sunshine" (Bill Withers). I cover "High And Dry" (Radiohead). I cover "Sullivan Street" by The Counting Crows. We're doing a medley, "Superstition" from Stevie Wonder, into "Rock with You," Michael Jackson, into "Doo Wop (That Thing)" by Lauryn Hill, then we go into "Family Affair" by Mary J. Blige."

This "Family Affair" is not to be confused, however, with Sly & the Family Stone's song of the same name. But speaking of that reclusive Sly, Wells once performed live for Mr. Stone. "It was a show put on by some guys that were making a documentary called *Whatever Happened To Sly?* – because he made like one public appearance a long time ago, then he disappeared forever. Of course, at the Grammy Awards he showed up for a split second. But even then, he was a bit of an enigma there. So he was in the audience that night. And it was nuts."

When asked about who Wells might like to collaborate with one day, this list is as unpredictable as is the man's music. "Stevie Wonder, James Taylor, and Patty Griffin – she kills me, man," Wells names. "She's my favorite female artist." Although Griffin's music can sometimes be a downer, that doesn't keep Wells from loving it. "It has a beautiful sadness to it. But she's had kind of a rough road in her life.

Although Wells is familiar in the Christian community, he is hesitant to label himself strictly a Christian artist. "The minute you put that title on your music, everybody thinks it's not for them if they're not a Christian," he observes astutely.

This doesn't mean Wells wants to exclude Christians from his music. "First, let me say a large portion of my fan base is Christian people, just because that's where I come from. A lot of colleges out here (in Southern California) support me a lot – like Biola and Vanguard. I feel that's important and I'm really grateful for it. I think I just try to tap into things that are true. I definitely try to tap into universally true themes that God has basically ordained and put into place. That comes out of music and it comes out of my heart."

In the midst of all the major label hoopla, Wells is wisely just trying to stay balanced. "I've been feeling more and more like He is preparing the way and that I just need to be obedient to Him and love my wife and just continue to walk the narrow path," he summarizes. With *Hold On*, Wells has a firm hold on what truly matters most.

✖

Flatfoot 56
A MUSICAL SMORGASBORD
BY ANNIE ESQUIBEL

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF FLATFOOT 56. THE QUARTET CONSISTS OF BROTHERS TOBIN (FRONTMAN), JUSTIN (DRUMMER) AND KYLE BAWINKEL (BASSIST) ALONG WITH THE MULTI-TALENTED INSTRUMENTALIST JOSH ROBIESON. WITH INFLUENCES LIKE THE POGUES, DUBLINERS AND THE CHIEFTAINS, SUCH INSPIRATION LEADS TO A MIX THAT CAN BE SUMMARIZED AS "HARDCORECELTICPUNK" (WITH) ONE LEADING TO ANOTHER AND STYLES AND GENRES BLEEDING INTO EACH OTHER. FLATFOOT 56 ARE ANYTHING BUT WHAT ONE WOULD EXPECT (SEE THE MIXED-UP DESCRIPTION IN THEIR REVIEW THIS ISSUE).

Starting their journey in Chicago, IL, they have picked up many different styles. They have a lot of local support in the Windy City. Flatfoot 56 are the "go-to" guys in Chi-town if you are a local band, Tobin says, "We are one the bands a lot of guys go to as far as local draw out goes, we are pretty established there." But how have they been doing outside of their city?

Touring to promote their new album, *Jungle of the Midwest Sea*, these guys throw a lot into performance. Of course they use original instruments like any band; guitar, bass and drums; but, unlike others, Flatfoot 56 are throwing in mandolin, bagpipes and whatever other Celtic instruments they manage to toss on stage depending on what song they are about to perform. Most of their live performances are improvised – leaving a lot to the imagination both for the band and the crowd. Doing this they can get different crowds involved in different ways. One will not see the same show twice.

The album is a 14-track fingerprint of who these guys are. It is composed of several messages leading to one result, which the band says: "You are who you are, so don't blow it." *Jungle...* has songs that can be described as an outlet for what we think and what to do with what we have. Other parts of the album include songs inspired by and written about history or personal experience. It's definitely one of those albums to listen to – lyrically as well as musically. It's surprising what someone will find here...

"Bright City," is about wanting to change the city. And being out on the road playing shows, encouraging others to change their city is exactly what they're doing. "We try to be an encouragement to people and encourage them towards things that are positive." explained Tobin, "The main focus of our lives is not to be part of a scene, it's more about the way we act and making sure we can be a positive impact."

With lyrics promoting introspection, Flatfoot 56 might just be that push many need to sort themselves out. A majority of the content is about sticking to beliefs, "changing your life and just being who you are." It's almost expected to have such constructive lyrics considering part of their writing process (although not so much on this album as the first) is writing songs while sitting in church, or as Tobin does, "If it comes to mind, I write it down and throw it out there." Then coming together at band practice to piece it together.

The band is touring at the moment, having hit many spots twice already in the past year, and will be doing so more this summer. Look for them at festivals this year, including Cornerstone. More band and tour information can be found at myspace.com/Flatfoot56.

Jungle of the Midwest Sea hits shelves on May 15, 2007.

✖

SLAPSHOT

Chasing Victory

THEY'RE GOING TO UPSET YOU

BY DAVID STAGG

IF YOU'RE A PROMOTER, CHASING VICTORY IS PROBABLY GOING TO UPSET YOU. THIS ISN'T BECAUSE THEY PROMISE TO PLAY AND THEN NOT SHOW UP. IT ISN'T BECAUSE THEY DON'T FULFILL ALL THEIR AGREED UPON OBLIGATIONS OR TRASH THE GREEN ROOM OR GRAFFITI EVERYTHING WITH THEIR BAND'S STICKER. IT'S BECAUSE THEY'RE GOING TO WAKE YOU UP REAL EARLY.

"We show up at the promoter's house at 6:00 a.m. (on the day of the show)," drummer Jeremy Lowery says. "We wake him or her up and tell them that we are in town and then immediately leave."

This is Lowery's response when you ask him how he prepares for a show – and it gets better. "Then we drive to the nearest lake or pond and fish for our lunch," he says. "We like to exercise, so we go out to a park and put on some exercise clothes and run around." I picture Lowery with multiple sweatbands and a pair of athletic shorts (a la Richard Simmons) jogging around with matching tracksuits on the four other band members in Chasing Victory following closely behind. This is a mildly disturbing thought.

Lowery, as far as I can tell, is not serious, but I wouldn't be surprised if any or all of the things he described has happened before. Lowery and his bandmates – vocalist Adam Harrell, guitarists Chris Cargile and Michael Lamb, and bassist Chris Crutchfield – form Chasing Victory, a five-piece hardcore band from Georgia – and they also form a very nice web of sarcasm.

Where do your draw your inspiration from when writing the record, both musically and lyrically?
Harrell: *Guitar Hero* and William Hung.

How do you think the public is going to receive the new record?
Lowery: Hopefully over the counter at Best Buy.

Lowery has his tongue firmly planted in his cheek; Harrell's response, though, is an interesting commentary on the genre in which they've been placed: While Harrell admits their sophomore effort, *Fiends*, might appeal to a broader audience, he also knows that sometimes the music doesn't matter – it's how you're perceived. And unfortunately, most people in the United States view you through one set of glasses: Myspace. "(*Fiends*) definitely has potential to please a much wider range of fans," he says regarding their sophomore effort, "but if we don't triple our Myspace friends, it might crash and burn." The term "broader audience" is an interesting one, one which can sometimes carry a bad connotation. The band might have been easy to pigeon-hole when they first came out, falling victim to genre-labeling, appearances, and a Myspace world – a world that appreciates a highly populated friends list and intensely slow breakdowns. But this time around, Chasing Victory wasn't out to please elitists or hipsters. "We wrote what we wanted to write, instead of attempting to appease the snooty underground population of scenesters," Harrell says. "(They) could care less what the music sounds like, and care more of how slow your breakdowns are."

Harrell swears he's not bitter. I believe him, but *Fiends* is still going to challenge most of their current fans' perception of them. "Lyrically and musically we were more honest on this record than the last," he says. Lowery elaborates on Harrell's thoughts: "We really liked our last album, but we wanted to give a more honest representation of ourselves this go-round. There is still a lot of the raw heaviness from the first record, but you'll also hear A LOT more singing on this new one."

Elitists let out a collective groan at the word "sing." Extremists will always want things heavier, but when Chasing Victory scales it back – Lowery even used the word "alternative" to describe the new record – the band instead embraces it and views it as potential for new fans, rather than being a catalyst to losing them. "When we first started Chasing Victory, we jumped on that (genre) bandwagon," Lowery says. "But the more we toured and found ourselves musically, I personally feel that we somewhat broke away from that genre and lifestyle. We do, however, retain a very small amount of, I guess, 'emo-core' influence in the new record, (although it's) very, very small. Our new album is more like heavy alternative rock."

The scene will adjust one way or another – though Harrell says the band is trying to squeeze itself out of that cubby-hole anyway – but the truth of the matter is that consumers are going to label, and it's not worth a fight. But it is worth the sarcasm.

Where do you see the future of hard-core/emo-core heading?
Lowery: I see the pants getting tighter, the hair getting pinker, the shirts getting smaller, and the music becoming even more regurgitated, but you know, as long as people get into it, I'm not going to dis it.

Harrell: I see it high-diving through a cloud of hair spray, right into a pair of size 2 girls' jeans filled with sticky mascara.

The title for their genre-busting *Fiends* intends to invoke two themes, each stemming from different meanings of the word. "One theme is 'an addictive personality,' which most of the characters in each song have," Harrell says. "The other theme is an 'enemy,' which is each person's flesh, or 'dark side,' if you want to be a comic book geek about it," he says and laughs. "Each character is symbolized by a creature that strikes fear, such as wolves, kings, zombies, etc. This is where the song titles come from." Lowery makes it clear that the songs don't end on the "dark side." Even if the song titles represent the negative side, each song offers redemption. "A lot of the songs offer alternatives to the said addictive personalities," he says. "Alternatives such as love found in God, friends, and healthy relationships with the opposite sex."

Chasing Victory is giving all of their sides – emotionally and physically, negative and redemptive – a rest; the band is on a break right now. They haven't done any touring since December. They've been taking time off to promote the record, doing interviews and playing local shows, but will soon move off to a six-week tour with hardcore powerhouse August Burns Red. They'll be on tour when the record will hit. The pressure will build. But even when the world starts coming in, they'll do their best to be walking examples of the alternatives to the addictions they wrote about on *Fiends*. "My life influences my music, and my music influences my life," Lowery says. "I have awesome friends, family, and an on-going, sometimes rocky, but always great relationship with God."

And at the end of the day, that's the one thing that matters to Chasing Victory. That, and making sure their promoter is up at 6 a.m.

✖

Photo: Neil Visel

Comeback Kid
WITH BLOODSHOT EYES AND SORE WRISTS

BY SETH WERKHEISER

"I JUST DON'T THINK MANY CDS WILL BE SOLD TEN YEARS FROM NOW."

Big words from Andrew Neufeld, vocalist of Comeback Kid. With the recent release of their second album on Victory Records, Comeback Kid flew across the Atlantic to Europe for a string of tour dates through Germany and the UK. I spoke with vocalist Neufeld before their March 3rd show in Sheffield, a city that gave us both Def Leppard and the Arctic Monkeys.

It was just recently – late 2006 – that Tony Brummel, president of the iconic Victory Records, put the label's catalog (dating back to 1993) in the iTunes Store. This was a big move by the same guy who said allowing fans to download individual tracks "cannibalizes full-length album sales and is ultimately detrimental to the artists who created the music." Neufeld's response? "Well, it does (hurt full-length album sales), but you have to keep up with the times. I'm curious to see what happens with labels and bands," Neufeld continued. "Just how easy it is to get music. I think it's pretty awesome, like people sharing music freely. I think that's a cool thing."

Dubbing tapes in the mid 90s was a way to discover new music. Now a connection to the internet brings almost every modern recorded note to your computer's hard drive. But it's not just the swapping of MP3 files that got the band where they are today. Releasing albums through a powerhouse like Victory, with distribution all over the world, certainly plays a part.

"It's pretty awesome to have a label that can deliver. Like, if a kid wants to buy our CD in Germany or Japan or Australia or something. It's pretty good." It's a combination of the internet machine and the Victory empire that keeps the band fueled for the road (they've "pretty much been a full-time touring band since 2003"), gaining fans and selling out venues all over the world.

"I probably say that, like, last week when we were in Germany... I would almost say some of our best shows ever are in Germany and, like, we had the best turnouts and everything," Neufeld said. "I mean it was crazy when we had a set amount of CDs for our first couple of German shows when our record just came out and, like, we sold them all out in a couple of days and we ... we did a big CD release tour without CDs. It was pretty (bleep), because we didn't get CDs for awhile."

Selling out of CDs in Germany after a handful of shows is an impressive feat for a hardcore band from Winnipeg, Canada. So, are the guys sweating a few album downloads from kids with cable modems and 80gb iPods?

"As long as people are getting our music ... I mean that's pretty much what we want," says Andrew. Their latest album, *Broadcasting…*, is the band's second release on Victory Records (their first Victory release, *Wake The Dead*, has sold over 100,000 copies to date). The meaning behind the album and the artwork (by Don Clarke) sounds appropriate for the times: "We're not really a political band or anything. I wouldn't say I'm always the most educated, as far as what's going on all the time – just to be honest," Neufeld admitted.

There's truthfulness in his voice. He chooses his words carefully, knowing full well that even an interview like this is considered "the media."

"I've just been noticing a lot of the media, especially in the United States, just like the fear that's always being instilled within the public. It's just kind of something I was thinking about and I've just been noticing a lot more recently than before. I just thought I'd write about it." Nothing more, it seems, than an observation, some writing and hitting the road with his band. "We'll never really know if sometimes with certain issues if the media can provide us with appropriate information."

So with an album released on Facedown Records a few years back the inevitable question came up – is Comeback Kid a "Christian band?" It's a "pretty commonly asked question," said Neufeld with a laugh. "Like, we did a record on Facedown. That was great, and I can totally see why people ask us that question all the time. I mean, everyone in Comeback Kid, we're pretty different people, we all have different ideas about life and religion and politics."

It's a response that's in a lot of interviews with bands who came from Christian backgrounds (Andrew was in Figure Four). Is it the "safe response," or is it making a bigger point? "I think a lot of times people want to put some kind of label on a band, or kind of put them into some kind of box or whatever. I think people feel the need to do that, but, yeah ... we get asked that in so many interviews it's ridiculous."

When the band isn't pushing to change the media landscape in the US, or being an acceptable option to play in youth groups, they are playing all over the world, exploring cities and taking in an entire lifetime of experiences by playing in a band. "It's unreal. I wouldn't have it any other way," said Neufeld. "Like, we totally love that we're able to go to different places and play for different people all the time. We just love getting out there and meeting new people, the opportunity we have right now, we feel pretty lucky to be here."

Once back from Europe the band will tour Canada and the United States with This Is Hell, It Dies Today and Parkway Drive. After that, it's off to Australia with Sick Of It All, a band that Andrew is thrilled to be playing with (for the second time). "Last December we toured with Sick Of It All and Madball in Europe and it was like ... Madball, is like, as far as hardcore goes, that's like the band for me. I was pretty excited to be on that tour." You can hear the excitement in his voice. "We got to do a Gorilla Biscuits tour during the reunion tour last summer. We get these opportunities, it's pretty wicked. We've toured with a lot of our fave bands."

Comeback Kid has seen more of the world in four years than some people see in an entire lifetime. Besides playing with bands that have influenced them over the years, the guys get to take in the sights, sounds, cultures and foods. "I know a lot of bands that tour internationally and they never really get in the mix at all. We get to walk around and stuff, find places to eat. Like today, we're in Sheffield and there's all these shops and stuff."

Though the adventure that the touring life offers sounds exciting, being on the road for nearly four years can be rough. And it's not so much the location or city that's hard to leave behind; "I miss my friends," Neufeld lamented. "My girlfriend.

"Its mostly that, nothing else really. If I had that all here, my life would be complete right now."

With that, Andrew and the rest of Comeback Kid will continue touring, playing with bands they love and making friends the entire time.

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Black Rebel Motorcycle Club

PERSONAL REVOLUTION

BY JOHN J. THOMPSON

SAN FRANCISCO'S BLACK REBEL MOTORCYCLE CLUB HAS BECOME ONE OF THE MOST CONSISTENTLY COOL BANDS IN MODERN MUSIC. SINCE MEETING IN HIGH SCHOOL IN THE MID-NINETIES, BASSIST AND LEAD VOCALIST ROBERT LEVON BEEN, GUITARIST PETER HAYES AND DRUMMER NICK JAGO HAVE DIALED IN A SOUND THAT IS ESSENTIAL AND PRIMAL, YET SOMEHOW COMPLETELY UNIQUE. SURE, THERE'S NOTHING NOUVEAUX ABOUT A POWER TRIO, AND BANDS HAVE BEEN EXPLORING THE BEAUTY OF MINOR KEY DRONES SINCE THE NINETEEN-SIXTIES, BUT WITH BRMC SOMETHING IS DIFFERENT. LIKE THEIR NAMESAKES, THE MOTORCYCLE GANG FROM THE CLASSIC 1953 FILM *THE WILD ONE*, THIS BAND EXISTS ABOVE ANY OVER-ARCHING SCENE. THEIR FOURTH ALBUM, *BABY 81*, IS THEIR BEST YET.

And it almost never came to be. Despite widespread critical and fan acclaim, private tensions and "excesses" nearly tanked the promising band in late 2004 when Jago walked. Been and Hayes soldiered on, cranking out the soulful and stripped down *Howl* as a duo. Though acclaimed and commercially the band's best selling disc, the DNA of BRMC was altered significantly.

Fortunately Jago's departure seemed to be more of a separation than a divorce and in 2005, literally at the end of the *Howl* sessions, he returned to the fold. "It took us getting away from each other," Hayes says, "to kind of kick us and go, 'Man, what are we thinking?'" Two of the songs on *Baby 81* came from in-studio jams when Jago first re-joined the group. Then, as they toured the world supporting *Howl,* they spent time during soundchecks coming up with the other songs that would become *Baby 81*. The result is a face-first helping of driving, guitar-centric, neo-psychedelic rock and roll that references their overall droning sound and the best moment's on their previous releases, 2001's self-titled trip, 2003's edgier *Take Them On, On Your Own*, and 2005's rootsier breakthrough.

Hayes explains that, despite the personal struggles surrounding that era of the band, the response from their fans was truly inspiring. "We took a pretty big side-step on that record," Hayes admits. "But to us it's music. Music's music. So it was really inspiring that our fans, for the most part, stuck with us and we gained more respect from them. That was exactly what we're looking for. We don't want to be the 'Saviors of Rock and Roll,' the name that we got from labels and that kind of thing." But for *Baby 81,* all of the elements were back in place, and BRMC brought the rock.

Thematically the band continues to explore the concept of personal revolution. While their music gets heavier, darker and more desperate, they feel that ultimately what they strive to offer their audience is hope in a seemingly hopeless world. When asked where this hope comes from, Hayes gets serious. "I guess it's kind of a naïve blindness," he confesses, "the belief that something can still be done about anything. It can be done by one person; just myself. The hope comes from the idea that I can hopefully fix what I think is wrong with me and in a way that actually affects the world. It still kind of boils down, to us anyways, to the place of personal protest. It's got to start somewhere. It feels like you're taking on the world on your own as far as holding onto your beliefs or ideals and what you hold in respect in the world and the things you see as far as the wrongs that are done in the world, through governments and religions and all that. You get enough people that really think they're on their own, but they're not. It becomes a collective being. That's the hope."

The album title refers to the bizarre, troubling and ultimately inspirational story about a baby found in the aftermath of the tsunami in Southeast Asia who was claimed by nine different mothers before her true parents were found. "It's a strange desperation," Hayes says about what would make the false mothers try to claim *Baby 81*. "I couldn't imagine that feeling, really. But there's a little bit of goodness. It helps someone find their way through and back home." For Hayes it's all very "spiritual."

"That's the only word I've really got for it," Hayes explains. "I don't know what other name to give it." He also sees the strange power music seems to have over people. "It freaks you out, it makes you happy, and then you're confused, because you're creeped out and happy. I think that's great. That's something new." Hayes continues, "I guess music to me is life. I guess spirituality is life. I don't really know. I'd rather be thinking about that kind of stuff than not."

But what Hayes does know, is that he is in a very good band. "We're not really good at tooting our own horn," he admits, "But we're a really good band and a lot more people should see us and hear the music. Not that we're any more important that anything else, everyone's got their place. But I think our place can be broadened."

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Photo: Tessa Angus

Becoming The Archety

THE PHYSICS OF METAL

BY DAVID STAGG

Photo: David Stuart

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LET'S TAKE A PIECE OF WOOD, FOR EXAMPLE. YOU GRAB YOUR LIGHTER, PUT IT TO A STICK OR A BRANCH OR ANY OTHER PIECE OF LUMBER YOU FIND AROUND YOUR HOUSE, AND SET IT ABLAZE (YOU WOULD BE DOING THIS, OF COURSE, IN A CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENT UNDER HIGHLY SUPERVISED CONDITIONS, SUCH AS IN YOUR FRONT YARD BY YOURSELF). WHILE MARVELING AT WHAT YOU'VE DONE, YOUR BRAIN STARTS TO MEANDER BACK TO HIGH SCHOOL CHEMISTRY CLASS, AND YOU WONDER: 'HOW IS IT, IN RELATION TO THE SCIENCE OF LIFE, THAT BECOMING THE ARCHETYPE ROCKS SO HARD?'

The answer is simple: Physics. You probably didn't know this, but the physics of metal were written in the laws of life before you or I could even throw the rock symbol with our hands. Becoming the Archetype has just managed to master the art. Their first textbook, *Terminate Damnation*, was a brutal, 11-song metal-fest that demanded the attention of the metal world. But now, the band is back, more evolved, and in full force with *The Physics of Fire*, their second release, sure to catapult them to the forefront of the metal scene.

And in case you were wondering (which I'm sure you were), the physics of fire is a pretty complex theory, despite it seeming as simple as using a lighter to torch a few branches you found in your front yard. Hydrocarbon molecules combine with oxygen from the available combustible air. Hydrogen atoms combine with oxygen to produce water vapor. Carbon atoms combine with… Well, whatever, but these three reactions give off more energy than they use up and, viola, heat.

Expanding on the physics of fire, professor Seth Hecox, guitarist and keyboardist for Becoming the Archetype, in the band's terms – a little less technical, a little more philosophical: "Fire refines, but it also demolishes; it provides warmth and light, but may shine light on and reveal something that didn't want to be revealed. Some types of fire can be started easily, but are also transient and quick to die out, while other fires – such as the sun or stars – are ancient and mighty and may last longer than the longest ages and reach further back in time than anyone can guess or account for."

Before Becoming the Archetype sat down to write any of the music for their sophomore release, Hecox, along with bassist and vocalist Jason Wisdom, and guitarist Alex Kenis (new to the band after former guitarist Jon Star left to pursue a career in recording) sat down to discuss what they wanted the feel of the album to be, both lyrically and musically. The number one thing they agreed on was that they were aiming for a dark and brooding sound, and from those ideas, the discussion of fire began to circulate. "The attributes and uses and symbolisms of fire are so rich and meaningful," Hecox says, "that it provided a deep well of ideas for our texts and for the way our music could come across."

So they had this idea for their metal record – which we'll call 'm' for metal – but you can't write a metal record without inspiration; so we'll tack on 'i' for inspiration into the equation: m = i. Currently, Hecox has been listening to a lot of piano music – think Ben Folds and Keane – but believes that he is indebted to other metal bands that have been putting out solid metal records. "I think Lamb of God had a good album and Mastodon hit it right on the head," Hecox says in regards to the latest in metal music. "I'm proud of them and glad they are paving the way for bands like BTA to have a platform on which to play our music."

But more importantly, the band's true inspiration lies in something non-musical, which, for our physics purposes, we'll call 's' for spirituality: m = (i + s). "Obviously a non-musical influence on each of us individually and as a whole is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," he says. "He has changed our lives and is the person we submit ourselves to in all matters of life, including music."

This gives us our base equation, m = (i + s), but no matter how inspired you are, no matter how great a record you write, the fans ultimately support your band and give you a backbone. We'll call this variable 'f' for fans. According to Hecox, it's the sole ingredient in making a venue worth playing. "There are many places we love to play, and the venue is part of the enjoyment, but honestly, the biggest thing by far is the attitude of the crowd," he says. "We've played some shows in some great venues then only have 30 kids come out and everyone kind of feels the lack of energy. But when the kids sort of fill up the place and people are making circle pits, push pits, and headbanging their heads off, we have a great time and they do, too."

This is what we call classical mechanics, a branch of physics that deals with the effects of energy and forces on the motion of physical objects. The long and the short of it: You run into a dude at their show, you're going to bounce off. The energy levels are high, and Becoming the Archetype only feeds off that to make the show even crazier.

Which leaves us with our final equation: $m=f^2(i+s)$. You take your fans and have them increase the metal exponentially when they're into it, multiply it by a combination of inspiration and spirituality, and you're got a record that BTA believes the public is going to dig. "I think they'll love it," Hecox says. "The people for whom I've sampled the songs so far have pretty much immediately phoned their friends and demanded that they buy the album and asked Best Buy when they can pre-order the album." He keeps it honest by admitting that most "elitists who want everything to be the most ridiculous and strange sounding thing ever" may not enjoy it; it's definitely a keeper for any fan of heavy music. "I think they'll be excited about this logical step in our musical and spiritual journey," he says. "If you like hardly any heavy music at all, I think you'll love *The Physics of Fire*.

"Musically, *Physics of Fire* cuts out the 'chaff' of '*Terminate Damnation*' and hones in on the brutal and musical parts," Hecox continues, describing the new record. It fits right in with the dark sound – eerie and more progressive – they were looking to create: "The heavy sections are heavier, the soft sections are more beautiful." But most importantly, they never abandoned the physics of metal: inspiration, spirituality, and the very reasons that fans listen to music. "We hope that our music moves people emotionally and spiritually, because that's the greatest thing we feel we can do," Hecox says. "The greatest things can't be spoken with words: That's why there's music."

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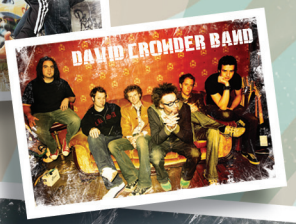

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HM THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE

BECOMING THE ARCHETYPE

Photo: David Stuart

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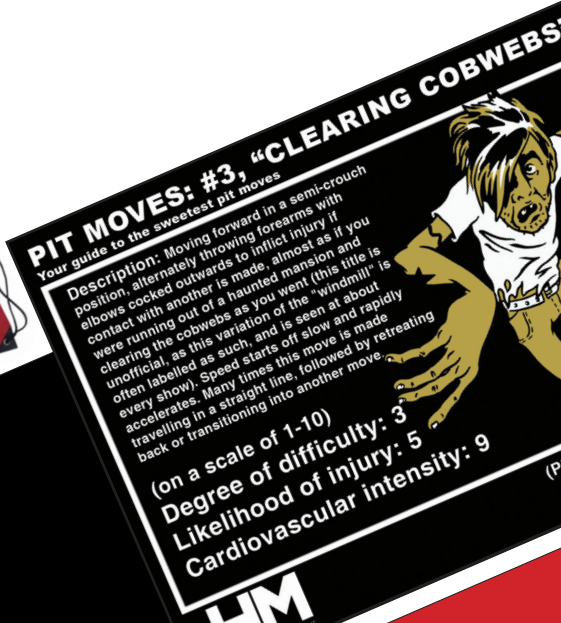
PIT MOVES: #3, "CLEARING COBWEBS"
Your guide to the sweetest pit moves
Description: Moving forward in a semi-crouch position, alternately throwing forearms with elbows cocked outwards to inflict injury if contact with another is made, almost as if you were running out of a haunted mansion and clearing the cobwebs as you went (this title is unofficial, as this variation of the "windmill" is often labelled as such, and is seen at about every show). Speed starts off slow and rapidly accelerates. Many times this move is made travelling in a straight line, followed by retreating back or transitioning into another move.
(on a scale of 1-10)
Degree of difficulty: 3
Likelihood of injury: 5
Cardiovascular intensity: 9
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PIT MOVES: #1, "THE WINDMILL"
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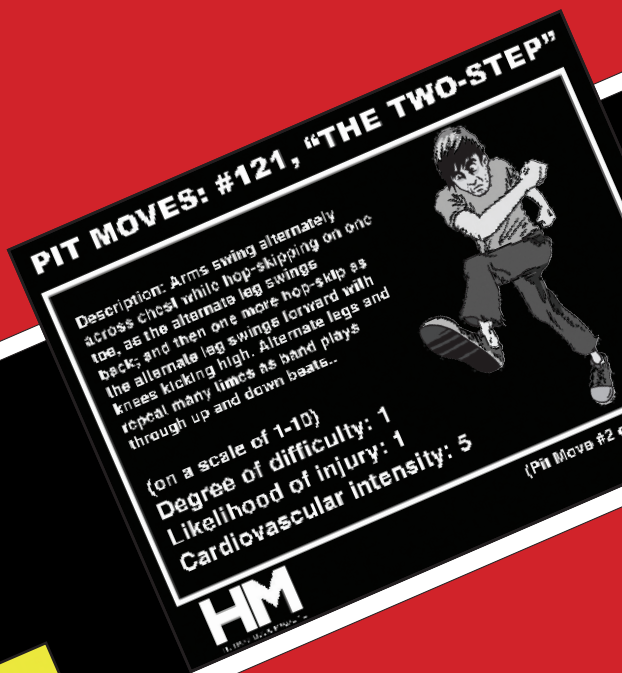
Description: Either almost standing still or rotating around in the pit like a "mini twister" with fully extended arms (with a clenched fist at each end) swinging in full 180-degree rotation at as high an angle as the person's shoulder blades/rotator cuffs will allow. Approaching blurring speed is a necessity and you get "bonus points" for changing direction as well as suddenly stopping and maintaining balance.
(on a scale of 1-10)
Degree of difficulty: 6
Likelihood of injury: 10
Cardiovascular intensity: 8


PIT MOVES: #121, "THE TWO-STEP"
Description: Arms swing alternately across chest while hop-skipping on one toe, as the alternate leg swings back, and then one more hop-skip as the alternate leg swings forward with knees kicking high. Alternate legs and repeat many times as band plays through up and down beats..
(on a scale of 1-10)
Degree of difficulty: 1
Likelihood of injury: 1
Cardiovascular intensity: 5
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Pit Move #5: Picking Up Change
Your guide to the sweetest pit moves
(on a scale of 1-10)
Degree of difficulty: 2
Likelihood of injury: 1
Cardiovascular intensity: 8
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Virgin Black
ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

BY DOUG VAN PELT

THERE'S PROBABLY AN OLD ADAGE SOMEWHERE THAT SAYS "GREAT ARTISTS ATTEMPT GREAT THINGS." WHILE AFTER ONLY TWO ALBUMS IT MIGHT BE PREMATURE TO ACCURATELY CALL THIS BAND KNOWN AS VIRGIN BLACK AS TRULY "GREAT" ARTISTS, THEY ARE CERTAINLY ON MY RADAR, WITH ANY NEW RELEASES BEING SNATCHED UP AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. I GUESS IT WOULD NOT BE PREMATURE FOR ME TO SAY THAT "I LOVE" THIS GOTHIC, DOOMY AND EXTREME METAL BAND FROM AUSTRALIA. AND THEIR ATTEMPT TO WRITE, RECORD AND RELEASE THREE FULL-LENGTH ALBUMS IS A GRANDIOSE PLAN, TO SAY THE LEAST. WE FIGURED AN UP-CLOSE INTERVIEW WITH THE BAND'S VOCALIST/PIANIST/KEYBOARDIST ROWAN LONDON WAS WARRANTED.

Give us a brief history of Virgin Black, and please elaborate on how/why you crafted your own, unique sound...
Strangely, for myself, I'm a relative newcomer to music, I had paid no attention to it until I was about 15, but when that happened, I was quickly, completely and utterly submerged in it. A few guys had dragged the extraordinarily talented Samantha out of introspective exile and before long she was running the show, fulfilling her destiny as the doom-queen. Upon my meeting the band, it was immediately apparent that we had precisely the same penchant for experimental, avant-garde – but most importantly emotional – music and aesthetics. We cut our own path, never really attaching ourselves to any scene, and feeling no pressure to create anything "marketable." Basically fear is the enemy of originality and we never had any fear, just the freedom to create this dark and dirgeful visage you see before you.

Why/what in the world inspired this giant 3-part album? How did this idea germinate?
To write a requiem-mass is an enormous responsibility, as one is dealing with (a) tradition dominated by the master composers. Also, the inherent subject matter is obviously extremely sensitive. Interestingly enough, both Samantha and I, for a long time, were thinking about a requiem mass, yet never communicated it to each other or to anyone else for that matter. I think it was just meant to be. When we began, there were no thoughts of three albums, but the process of composing began to feel claustrophobic and restrictive. As soon as the idea for three albums was spawned, it was immediately liberating; and as difficult as it was to record all three, the actual writing process was inherently quicker and easier within this freedom.

What were some of the biggest challenges in pulling this off?
Ha, everything! No, the writing was the easy part; it was the process of recording that all but crushed our spirits. Not wanting to take the easy road and have an end result sounding like some faux symphonic over-produced Euro metal band, we insisted on it sounding organic and natural, which is not so easy when it also has to sound so very, very prodigious. We went for as many single-take recordings as possible to keep the slightly imperfect performance feel; also in the case of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, we didn't have the luxury of time, as every minute cost us a fortune. It needs to be said, though, the musicians were extraordinary; having only seen the written music on the day of recording, their performance was spectacular. In reality, with a whole lot more finance it would have been a much quicker process and much less painful for us, but pain's not so bad … when it's all over.

Describe in detail the first album we're going to hear (it's the second part of the trilogy we're getting first, *Mezzo,* right?)...
Mezzo forte is the centre-piece of the series, where the band and orchestra both collide startlingly and combine harmoniously. Musically it's the widest ranging of the three requiems. It's based on somewhat of a middle ground, hence the *Mezzo Forte* tag; but also branches out to touch on some very heavy passages, including the first glimpses of what's called the "death choir" and also blends in classical arrangements and has sections of exclusively classical performance. The blending is the key here; it's not a matter of having a band playing a song after some disparate orchestra intro. Band and orchestra weave in and out of each other overlapping and evolving. Thematically, *Mezzo* is a clash of the old world religious texts and our own original, more human, emotive words.

Please describe in some detail the other two albums.
The *Requiems* that plunder the extremes in the series are *Pianissimo* and *Fortissimo*. *Pianissimo* is an entirely classical album and, oddly, while Samantha and I wrote every note for every instrument and voice, we barely feature on the recording – my solo vocals being the main exception. It's very much based on composition rather than a typical band recording, with the material performed exclusively by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. *Fortissimo*, the opposite extreme is dominated by de-tuned guitar heaviness, our "death choir" and vocals from myself that provide not a single melodic note, just death-voice only. Admittedly, there's still an interplay between the death and traditional choirs, some trailing remnants of orchestral moments, but on the whole, it's focussed on a suffocating heaviness.

[Continued on page 57]

The Chariot

TEARING OFF THE TAGS

BY BRADLEY HATHAWAY

I'M NO SCHOLAR OF EASTERN STUDIES OR ANYTHING OF THE SORT, BUT I'VE HEARD THAT SOME CULTURES IN THE EAST CARE LESS ABOUT THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL WHO IS ACCOMPLISHING ANYTHING AS MUCH AS THEY ARE ABOUT WHERE THAT PERSON HAS COME FROM, IN PARTICULAR WHO THEIR PARENTS ARE. AMERICA, THOUGH, NOT SO MUCH. I DOUBT ANY OF YOU REALLY CARE WHAT JOSH SCOGIN'S MOM OR DAD HAS DONE WITH THEIR LIVES OR THEIR LOVE OR THE NIGHT THEY MADE LITTLE JOSH. BUT YOU DO, I THINK, CARE A BIT ABOUT WHAT JOSH HIMSELF HAS DONE.

It's his history that has probably landed him and his band, The Chariot, on the cover of this magazine – whether he or his bandmates like it or not. Sure, The Chariot jams and is doing very well, but let's be honest, Josh is somewhat of a legend in the Christian hardcore scene because of his previous efforts in fronting Norma Jean up to *Bless the Martyr*... I do not mean to give him legendary status and make him out to be something he is not. I do not mean to give him a big head. I do not mean for you to look at him differently in a higher position than many of you already put him at, but facts are facts, kids. And it's on him to not puff up and it's on the reader to not puff him up.

"...this is what I've always wanted The Chariot to be."

"I never ever, ever, *ever* wanted the Chariot to be 'Josh Scogin ex-Norma Jean' to begin with. But I'm not ignorant and I knew that was probably going to happen. Solid State, ya know, they are a label and they are looking out for their best interest and everything, and they hoarded that to the ground." Josh said about the obvious ex-Norma Jean tag that The Chariot was instantly branded with and, up to this point, has yet been able to shake. With a rotating cast of members that seems to often change, it would be hard to not see them as just Josh's band, but the times are a changin'. With the now not-so-recent departure of bassist Beiser and guitarist Keller, Josh and drummer Jake Ryan were left to fill their shoes. They both already had a few dudes in mind from Jake's home of Kansas City; and, in no time, Dan Eaton and Jon Terrey joined on guitar, along with Jon Kindler on bass. They each quickly went from chilling in KC to traveling the States and now Europe in their respective positions. "It was almost like a puzzle that fit, and it just perfectly worked out." states Josh.

And it's in the talking about the current manifestation of The Chariot that Josh seems to light up. He is now a very content and happy man, hopeful of the future for his band. A few times he refers to the new guys as a puzzle and all things that have happened prior have been for a greater good for everyone involved. They are all best friends that love being around one another. When they aren't on tour they were wishing they were or are always hanging out together in Douglasville, Georgia, where everyone now lives "if they wanted to or not," Josh laughs. There's a zest and newness about them Josh very much welcomes, with all excitedly contributing to the making of the new record, *The Fiancee*.

"We wrote the entire record – start to finish – just one week before we went into the studio. It was a complete collaborative effort with everyone bringing something to the table. We are all so much on the same page with where we want to be musically and saw eye to eye that everything just gelled so well, and this is what I've always wanted The Chariot to be."

According to Josh, it's the collaboration and agreement on where the band is headed that he believes has allowed them to produce what he sees as the defining record for his band. "I think this record defines what The Chariot needs to be. This is The Chariot. If you don't like it, I can't go, 'Well, I hope you like the next record.' I mean, I hope it's better and different, but this is The Chariot."

He means it, too. It's this DIY attitude that defines The Chariot. When they made their first record live and sound as raw as they did, they did it because they wanted to. When they tend to throw themselves around the stage instead of focusing on playing the song properly, they do it because they want to. That's the way Josh has always and will forever roll. "At the end of the day we are making the record for ourselves; if it's something we want to listen to. People roll out the red carpet for you one day and then crucify you the next, so we just write for ourselves." And they record the way they want to as well.

With Matt Goldman producing, Josh and company played around with sounds as they saw fit. While it's hard to make out or appreciate some of the sounds on the record because it's so sporadic, fast, and often heavy, they went through some pains to get what they got.

"We had the idea to put a guitar amp under a piano with it facing up, making the sound travel up into the piano, where we had a mic. It just sounded cool, so we kept it. But no one will ever know how we got that sound. They'll just think it's distortion or something, but we know." Or having microphones set up way down the hall as Jake Ryan pounds on the drums. Or thinking it awesome to have "Aaron Weiss [mewithout You], a lyrical genius, not use his voice but play harmonica on the record," laughs Josh. Or have their pal, Hayley of Paramore, sing on the record because they wanted "something pretty and something clean," but forgetting her to be on a major label and asking permission from the powers that be. "The next day my phone blew up, I had Atlantic records, lawyers, managers, everybody calling me asking what she was doing on the record. We were just friends, but I forgot about all that stuff on the business end," recalls Josh.

While Josh says they aren't writing for other people or the dollar bill – which I obviously believe, because the new record isn't exactly the most accessible heavy record or any kind of jams that teenie boppers will soon run to – they are open to doing bigger and better things if they want to. For example, why not go on tour with P.O.D. and Pillar as they did earlier last year? Or more recently, why not have the singer of Paramore on your record? "I think we're all down for whatever. I'm down with trying it. There's nothing wrong with having a lot of people like your band or whatever. If we can get on a tour that we feel like will work, then yeah. As an artist you want as many people as possible to share what you have done, obviously. But, at the same time, as an artist – if it doesn't ever happen – you still enjoy what you've done and you still painted your picture for your own pleasure and your own viewing and, ya know, if money comes and people come, cool. If not, cool. None of us really care about money, that's not rock and roll."

The Chariot is Josh Scogin, Jon Terrey, Dan Eaton, Jake Ryan, and Jon Kindler. Josh is very much an integral part of the band, but still only a part. They should no longer be referred to as ex-Norma Jean. They are no longer the newest band on Solid State. They are officially the real deal and *The Fiancee* should fully solidify their position as a group, uniquely creating music that only The Chariot can make. Who else has harmonica on a hardcore record?

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This is Bradley's first ever interview.
His real job is here:
myspace.com/bradleyhathaway

[Virgin Black cont'd]

What is your take or feelings about your art being marketed or not being marketed to a scene and subculture called "evangelical Christianity" or "CCM" ...?
I see Virgin Black as a loner in many ways. Through our entire history we've all but disregarded "the crowd" and made our own path – not out of a conscious decision to separate ourselves, but purely as an instinctive offering or outpouring. Stylistically, I see so many artists desperately wanting to "belong" and exist within a comfortable sub-culture, but at the same time gesticulating about their so-called originality and uniqueness. What I'm alluding to is that our attitude in every facet is one of natural existence that circumvents the tailoring of a style and equally a spiritual mandate.

How would you define "darkness" and "darkness of the soul?" How does a Christian find God in these times? What benefit does "darkness" have in a believer's life? How does dark, doomy, gothic music cater to, enhance, or compliment such moods, brief periods, or scenes...?
I remember a quote, "The opposite of life is not death, it's indifference." When one constantly strives to encompass their soul in the "light" of life for fear of darkness, the result is often a grey haze of blissful ignorance. This is much like the deceptive term of being "high" on drugs, which actually condemns oneself to a middle ground plateau, eroding the highs for fear of the lows. As difficult as it can sometimes be, I would rather live life in all its glorious and agonizing richness. Dark art is to me, completely different again. Conservative society has been trying for years to pin down a select few artistic sub-cultures and hold them accountable for the ills of the world with laughable results. I can't explain why I'm drawn to dark art, but I can vouch that it's a completely genuine and harmless dark mire I dwell in. Perhaps an individual's interests are of more concern if they are borne out of a disingenuous convergence with a particular scene or culture? I'm not sure; but I would encourage people to be the best person possible within their own reality.

Please think of some myths surrounding the gothic culture and break them or shed the light of truth on them. What are some surprising things that a granny might be shocked to learn when it comes to being exposed to the gothic culture?
The defence of the "evil" sub-cultures should be a forgotten memory by now. I'd fear more for my safety around a redneck construction worker than a Slayer-mad metal-head, and more for the well-being of a stressed, work-obsessed business person than the down-trodden goth.

If you could dictate or give the recipe for "best listening experience" for fans when they get each new disc in this trilogy, what would it be?
I know it's so shockingly and dreadfully "old school," but how about listening to it on this thing called a CD? All I really care about is that it's heard in the best quality possible; and for my ears that's not mp3's, especially taking into account the variety of compression qualities that the album will have inflicted upon it. So a CD, good sound system, the rest is up to the individual.

How important are dynamics and opposites in musical composition for your songs? What is the purpose of using two differing sounds/tempos/approaches (or more than two) in a Virgin Black song? Why?
We've always employed seemingly disparate elements in combination to create a vivid image. For example: an uneasy, sinister feel with cold and harsh mechanical drums coupled with warm, rich strings, but the use of major, minor and dissonant note combinations along with performance dynamics has been something equally utilized. With *Requiem*, dynamics in the music are more important than ever. While the concept is obviously ambitious to the extreme and very experimental, the music itself is actually less eclectic and more pin-pointed than previous material. This leaves the melodies, rhythms and tonal qualities to manipulate the mood. Along with time-signatures, notes and specific articulations, we had to write in detailed dynamics when we wrote all the scores for the orchestra to perform. It's truly amazing to witness the living, breathing life form that is an orchestra. On one hand, there's the rigidness; they strictly played what we wrote, no more and no less. On the other hand, they demonstrated, with the help or our wonderful conductor, how sensitive to each and every instrument each musician is. There's a constant ebb and flow and conscious balancing act going on to provide peak richness and cohesiveness. It's difficult to explain, but thoroughly enthralling to experience.

For anyone who has read what I refer to as our "dictionary definition", (virgin black – (ver-jin-blak): an anomalous harmony between the juxtapositions of purity and humanity's darkness), it's obvious that contrast and concepts that appear to oppose each other are something that deeply permeate the Virgin Black philosophy. It's an attitude that steadfastly challenges prevailing perceptions. Here's a question I ask: If one person establishes a set of beliefs and spends their life trying to prove those beliefs, and another spends their life looking to disprove their own beliefs, out of the two, who has the greater faith? Is the interrogation of faith at odds with itself, or does it strengthen it?

"When one constantly strives to encompass their soul in the "light" of life for fear of darkness, the result is often a grey haze of blissful ignorance."

What can one expect if they get a chance to see Virgin Black perform live in the near future? Are you going to perform all of the album in a performance? Selections from all three in one section? Songs from your whole catalog? What?
At some point when all three requiems have been released, I could see us attempting some grand "*Requiem-fest*," but at this stage we'll be performing a set that throws everything into the mix.

What is it about music that you like? If you had to live without music at all, how would you survive?
I didn't choose music. Rather, it hunted me down, cornered me and made me its "whipping boy." People talk to me about creating music for a myriad of reasons, and those reasons never strike a chord with me; it's just something outside of any "normal" thought process. It makes me think of the general attitude of a world that thinks it knows something, that it has an answer for everything. Personally, I think it's good to stop thinking you have the right answers and instead, start asking the right questions.

Anything else you'd like to add?
Seek truth. Find it for yourself. Let it be your own experience … not in the shadow of another. Appreciate the time. For those interested, you can look us up at virginblack.com and myspace.com/virginblackofficial

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Chevelle
OPENS A VEIN (SORT OF...)
a conversation with Pete Loeffler

BY BRIAN QUINCY NEWCOMB

IF WE ARE TO TAKE THE DISCUSSIONS IN THE CHAT ROOMS OF A VARIETY OF HARD MUSIC BAND WEBSITES SERIOUSLY, IT SEEMS THAT, FOR SOME FOLK, THE MUSIC CAN'T BE HEAVY ENOUGH. THAT IS UNTIL IT BECOMES AN OVERLOUD, INDECIPHERABLE SLUDGEFEST OF GRINDING DISTORTION AND RHYTHMIC BEATS. BUT, SOME FOLK STILL CARE ABOUT SONGS, AND MELODIES, AND WHAT THE BAND HAS TO SAY.

Thus, this comment from Chevelle's singer/songwriter/guitarist Pete Loeffler on whether his new disc is "heavy enough": "Yeah, in some ways I think it is heavier. It's funny, because a lot of the kids are chatting online, saying that the single is actually lighter than they expected. All the advance press said it was going to be a heavier record, but the single they heard was a radio-edit, which took out a scream and part of a heavy bridge. So, really, the record is actually a little bit heavier than what people are hearing on the radio."

And the new record, sounds heavier on the bass end, more driving and fast-paced overall, so is it really about singing vs. screaming? Because *Vena Sera*, to these old ears, does sound more melodic. Loeffler agrees, "I think it is, too; it's a more melodic record. That's actually what I focused on, more on the singing side of what we do instead of just the screaming stuff. This is our fourth record, and I definitely don't want to forget what it's all about, and that's definitely the music, the song, the melody."

But then if we're taking those internet chat-roomers seriously, almost more important than the music, is the break up and personnel changes in this one-time band of biological brothers. Chevelle came to the fore on Steve Taylor's Christian-based Squint label, which also gave the world Sixpence None the Richer, in 1999, with Pete and brother Sam on drums, and younger Joe on bass. Two successful albums for Epic later, Joe has left the band – he says he was fired – while they were still on tour, and he has since been replaced by another close relative, Dean Bernardini, a brother-in law to the Loeffler's.

While I'm less interested in the he-said/he-said drama of a band break-up, even one that pits brothers against each other, Pete Loeffler is clear that it is better for Chevelle, inside and out. "Oh, yeah," he says uncategorically, "this should have been done years and years ago. It's the right move. We have so much fun on stage now, and on tour being friends – it's a huge change. We didn't have that before, it never clicked. We have so many of the same influences, and the same kind of work ethic. We all want this to succeed, and we're all willing to work at it. We didn't have that before, it's a great thing.

"Dean is an old friend of ours. We've known him since we were sixteen. He's actually toured with us a few times in his other bands. When the (bleep) hit the fan, literally, we had to scramble, as we were about to hit two big headline runs. Geno Lenardo (of Filter) filled in on one of those runs, and Dean spent that whole time (learning Chevelle's music). We told him, 'If you can get ready in the time that you have,' which was about six weeks, then he'd have the gig. We went out with Geno and we came back and Dean just blew us away with his ability to sing and play."

At a later point in the interview, Loeffler was talking about how hard it is to get to the level they've attained in the music business. "It's a job. A lot of people will say, 'You really blew up quick,' but they didn't see the 200,000 miles traveling in three vans with trailers. It's a ton of work, and you have to devote your life to it, or else you don't have a chance. Unless you hit the musical equivalent of winning the lottery." When I asked if that required level of commitment and work ethic explains the break with his brother Joe, he admitted, "In a nutshell, that explains it."

But Pete is clear that *Vena Sera*, while it contains some of the volatile emotions he's been feeling in the transition, it's not merely about the break-up. I asked if the title was about 'bloodletting,' and Loeffler said, "That's close. It's 'vein liquids.' In the past we'd done longer titles, and this time we just wanted to do something simple and to the point. People are going to think that all these songs are going to be about me being pissed off at Joe. In fact, I got misquoted in one recent article. I really don't want people to look at the record in that way at all. But the guy (writer) actually has me saying it the other way."

Some fans of the band since the very first album might be hungering for something on the line of the thank you to Steve Taylor that said he believed "with us that this was God's plan." If you're looking for further affirmations of faith, they are not running on the surface. In fact, even if the record is not solely about the broken relationship with Joe, it's not a real positive record lyrically. "Yeah, that's what we do," states Loeffler. "I'm not a negative person, you know, all the time. I'm not walking around brooding in my daily life. I get most of it out through the music, which is something that a lot of people don't have, which is why you have road rage. A lot of people will see a show and say, 'Wow, you're so different on stage (than expected).' But I really don't feel any different, what we do is an outlet. When I'm up there on stage, as cheesy as it sounds, I'm up there screaming for them. I'm talking about the daily life, daily things, relationships, and I think people connect with that."

But Chevelle music is not often deeply personal or self-revelatory, says Loeffler. Asked about which song had the strongest personal connection, his response took a different direction. "My favorite song on the album is 'The Fad,' it's very inspired by the whole Vegas club scene, where we recorded the instrumental tracks for the album. When we went out and folk took us to these clubs, we'd walk past everybody and they're all dressed the same, you know. It was an interesting experience, it's not something I do often or am exposed to, so it's just kind of making fun of them."

Ah, but it sure beats road rage, eh?

Chevelle will be opening for Evanescence in the Spring, but soon Pete hopes his band will return to headline their own club tour. Summing up, Loeffler states: "At this point, I just turned 30, we've had four records out, we're in our second record contract, and we're with our third or fourth bass player, we're at a point where we just want some control again. Music is in my life, in my blood. It's blood liquid, that's all it's meant to say."

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L-R: Sam Loeffler, Pete Loeffler, Dean Bernardini [Photo: Daragh McDonagh]

Saliva & Ligion

A MEETING OF THE MINDS...

RECORDED AND TRANSCRIBED BY AISHAH WHITE

When Saliva and Ligion kicked off their 45-city tour in Corpus Christi, TX, this went down during Ligion's opening set: Saliva lead singer, Josey Scott, hung at the side of the stage and liked what he heard so much, he decided to take it a step further. When Saliva took the stage, they broke into a Police cover and Josey got right up in band namesake and lead singer, Ligion's face, who was watching at the side of the stage and he pulled him from the wings onto the stage in front of 2,000 screaming fans and passed him the mic. Without missing a beat, Ligion jumped in to lead the audience in an electrically charged cover of the Tears for Fears classic, "Shout," as the SRO crowd went wild, fists pumping the air. Sweaty and happy backstage after the show, Lig was feeling the high of the night. Like a proud big brother, Josey, passing Ligion in the corridor, gave him a slap on the back and said, "Grab a notepad, I'll teach you everything you need to know." Thus began a friendship that the following exclusive interview attempts to capture.

Josey Scott: What part does suffering and pain have to do with good art? Why?
Ligion: I think it has everything to do with it. I think all artists in one way or another are tortured souls or find themselves creating torture on themselves. I've never been able to lay down in a place where I was completely content and complacent. I forgot who said it, I think Van Gogh or something, they asked him how are you doing today? And he said, "Miserable, cuz that's how I have to think right now and that's the way I see the world around me."

JS: How does that affect you lyrically? Does it affect you on the approach or the descent of the music?
L: I think on the approach, cuz on the descent you have to come to terms with it. The approach is that trouble or that whatever – that spark that gives you a reason to, cuz that's how I express… See, all these songs come from a dark place that we didn't want to leave in a dark place. We wanted to bring some kinda light, some kind of optimism that doesn't have to be so bad. Things are so bad, but there is something on the other side, there is a bump in the road, but you get over that. So all these songs we tried to, the best we could, is take something that we were dealing with, whether it was suicide or depression or relationships and saying, "Hey, somebody made it out, and it can be okay."

JS: How does your band name and your name relate to the word religion? How does religion or faith influence your music?
L: It's huge. The band started out as a solo project. I didn't have a band and I was leaving another band. There are so many situations where bands break up and, once they break up, they loose everything. You have to start from ground zero. So when I started Ligion, I have always struggled with the idea (of) religion. It's always been an issue for me. And I grew up in a very non-religious household, but (a) spiritual household. So I did some studying and I realized that a lot of these religious things don't pertain necessarily to what I believe. And that is not getting too spiritual. In the Bible it doesn't talk about religion. It talks about a relationship and the church – it coined the phrase during the time of Sodom and Gomorrah, "to regather the people." And a Ligion is "a gathering of mass." The Roman Army was called a legion. Anything that is a unified group is a legion. So, they tried to re-control... and, as a kid when I was growing up, I was very into comic books and I related to the super heroes. And dual identities. I was really into Batman, and X-men, and Spiderman, and the whole concept of Batman and Bruce Wayne. I understood that and from the time I was little, I always wanted to be a super hero. And then I found that out, but then when I got on stage and so I took on this part of me that is a part of me, but I just renamed it and that was Ligion. And that simply means just gathering people together under one roof, united.

JS: How is the Saliva tour going for you? Any Complaints? Suggestions? Or things that you love?
L: It's going extremely well. We are very blessed to be able to be in this position and this is a huge opportunity for us, you know. Our record comes out in March and to be on a tour like this in front of this many people every night is huge for us.

JS: It's huge for us to be on tour with bands that we really musically see as a force to be reckoned with, like you guys.
L: Before we got on this tour I was really interested to see how this would work. No one knows who we are and whatever, but as far as all of our guys...

JS: Well they do now…
L: We've gotten along extremely well. It's been a ball… I don't want it to end.

L: Are you happy with where Saliva is, or more importantly, where you are today?
JS: Uh ... are *you* happy with where Saliva is? Just Kidding! Yeah, I am, very much! I'm glad you used the word happy, because I fell in love 3, 4 years ago with my wife and I/we got married and had a child, so I know what happiness is. And a band, like you know, is a 4 to 5 way marriage, except you don't (bleep), you don't have sex. That's the only difference. You comfort each other, hold each other and fight with each other… Yeah, I am really happy. This album, *Blood Stained Love Story*, is my heart. For me, this album is more love story than it is blood stained. Yeah, I'm very happy with it, both professionally and creatively.

L: Who around you or close to you is proud of your success?
JS: My wife and my mother are my biggest fans.

L: What do you think other people around you see when they look at you? What do you want to portray?
JS: That's a good question … um, I'm really self-conscious. I think my biggest insecurity is that I'm a big man. I'm not your typical Tommy Lee sized guy. I'm 6' 4," almost 275 lbs. I look more like a wrestler than a rock star. I think that matters a lot more to me than to my friends and fans. On one hand, I want to be different, I want to separate myself from the pack and I think my size is just another thing that separates me; and that's good. There's nothing wrong with that. But on the other hand, I wonder all the time should I be doing more, should I be, you know – Like, I hate anything that hurts. I don't like getting shots, don't like going to the dentist, I don't like having a (bleep) personal trainer, you know? And the label has asked me to do those things, at certain times. And that wasn't wrong, ya know? That was a lot more for my health than for my body size, but that's probably my biggest thing that I know bothers me, but probably doesn't bother anybody else as much as it bothers me. I hope they see somebody who's charismatic, I always wanted to be that Nikki Sixx type character, that Elvis, that character that walks into a room and everything stops. Not that I'm the apostle or something, not in an arrogant way. I just wanted people to notice me and just know

I'm there. I hope they see love, I hope they see I'm approachable.

L: You ever miss the simple life?
JS: Yeah. I do – Like last night. I do, but I don't. I understand, cause I'm that fan, too. At the Grammy's, I stopped in Walgreens and I bought 2 (bleep) 36-exposure cardboard cameras and walked around. From Alabama, to Eminem, I walked around and asked if I could take a picture with them. Just because I want proof that I was in their life for a second.

L: Is there a song on this record that is the core of *Blood Stained Love Story*?
JS: I think, "Starting Over," for me, because it's a lot about what my guitar player went thru with his divorce and a lot about what my sister went thru with her divorce – just totally losing everything and resetting, re-finding and reacquainting yourself with some kind of stimulating life. And excepting that; not crying or wallowing in it.

L: From 1-5 put these things in order by their importance: Rockstar, father, husband, friend and son.
JS: Damn, I had to write that (bleep) down, that's like a math problem! You are such a good interviewer. Really, man, so creative. I'm (bleep) in envy of you!

L: Thanks, appreciate that.
JS: Husband – I would have to say is most important to me, because Kendra, I bring my wife out here with me on the road, you know, because I want to share this with somebody. I can't share this with Cody, because he has to go to school and be reared up in this lifestyle. But I mean, he has his mother and his step-dad or whatever and they're wonderful parents. I think I'm blessed in that regard. They could be bastards; and they're not. Husband is most important to me, because I have someone to share this dream with. Father would have to be next.

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Pictured: Ligion on top, Josey Scott. For more of this interview, go to hmmag.com

Faces to watch
SEE HEAR MEET IN 2007
BY DOUG VAN PELT

EVERY YEAR THERE'S ALWAYS A SURPRISE GROUP OR TWO THAT CAPTURE ATTENTION ON A BIG SCALE ... WHETHER THEY'RE A BRAND NEW BAND VENTURING OUT OF THE GARAGE FOR THE FIRST TIME OR A VETERAN ACT FINALLY GETTING THE RECOGNITION THEY'VE WORKED SO HARD FOR, IT'S ALWAYS FUN KEEPING AN EARLY EYE ON A BREAKOUT BAND. HERE'S A FEW THAT MIGHT TURN YOUR HEAD IN '07

Kissing Cousins
"People always ask, 'Are you really cousins?'" explains Heather Bray Heywood. "It is the name of an Elvis movie. Beth, my drummer, is the brainchild behind this name, the details of her madness will be left for her to explain. All I know is when we had a pretend band I called it, 'The Missionettes,' and she luckily vetoed it!!" Heather describes their music as: "Indie rock music played by girls. As far as girl musicians go, PJ Harvey is my idol, but I feel influenced by different genres of bands/musicians from the The Beatles to Nirvana to Johnny Cash to Isobel Campbell." As per the small list of "bands that changed my life," she lists: "Map, Starflyer 59, and Pedro the Lion changed my life – literally. The music of Pedro the Lion not only infiltrated and inspired the small group of kids where I grew up, but my first date with my now husband was a Pedro show. Map gave me the opportunity to start playing guitar again, to travel; and, of course, my first Kissing Cousins' song ('Silhouettes,' from *ep1* is a Map cover song). Lastly, Starflyer 59 – the music has always held nostalgia for me and I still love every album, plus seeing Starflyer was my introduction to the existence of Jeff Cloud, who I so adore and who made this band a reality."

[You can see the Kissing Cousins video for "Silhouettes" at decapolis.com]

The Fold
Like any band, their favorite songs to play live are the ones that the crowds most respond to. "On the first record, those songs are 'Gravity' and the aptly-named 'Title Track.' We're making bets on a few of the new songs, though, they may take the cake for crowd participation. I feel like the new songs bring a lot more energy, they will be fun to dance and sing your lungs out to. I'm wagering my car on it." The Fold describes its music as "somewhere between the pop-goodness of an Elvis Costello or The Beatles and a darker-tinged guitar-driven band like Deftones. We like a wide variety of bands, like: Fountains Of Wayne, Far, Poor Rich Ones, Ben Folds, Billy Joel, Kent, Mew, Superdrag, This Is Me Smiling and about a billion others. Sometimes if I don't feel like explaining all of that, I say we're like the Foo Fighters; everyone likes the Foo Fighters … even Prince!" It never hurts to have a sense of humor, but vocalist Dan Castady gets all serious when asked about bands that've changed his life. "Once I got over Michael Jackson, my first favorite 'band' was Def Leppard. That was probably when I made my decision to play music. Then, Queen (thanks, *Wayne's World*!), then punk rock (Screeching Weasel, NOFX, Pinhead Gunpowder, Fifteen, Face to Face, Rancid), then Fountains Of Wayne, Elvis Costello and Billy Joel, and nowadays I freak out over Jimmy Eat World, Death Cab and The Killers quite a bit." The band's latest album, *Secrets Keep You Sick*, was a lot more fun to record than the previous one. "We finished in half the time, and recorded twice as much. We just were more prepared this time. We know that a lot is on the line, and luckily we feel like these songs are the best songs we've ever written. I really laid my emotions out on the table more than ever before. I went through some heavy stuff last year with losing my Mom to cancer, so all of that stuff just poured out into the lyrics. I definitely held nothing back. I had to stop singing and just cry it out a couple of times."

Daphne Loves Derby
"I feel very stupid every time I say this, but the name is so random," admits guitarist/vocalist Kenny Choi. "We never thought we'd be a serious band; so we never changed it. I guess it works, though." Choi doesn't waste time getting fancy or heady with describing the band's sound. "I think the best way to describe our music is just: 'indie rock with soul.' Our major influences for this album (*Good Night, Witness Light*) were: Saves the Day, The Eagles, Chicago, James Taylor, Jimmy

Eat World." In regards to the bands that changed his life, he explains, "I started playing guitar just to cover Green Day songs; so they are a major inspiration for my early days. My parents used to always listen to bands like the Eagles and Simon & Garfunkel, so, I think their sounds always stayed in my heart." This connection to the past helped them on their latest album. "We wrote so many songs for this album; trying hard to find the sound we wanted. We listened to a lot of old music, and tried to figure out what made simple songs so special. In the process of recording, we really chilled out and had fun. We wanted to stop worrying about what people would think of the songs, and had fun with many instruments. Because of this, I think we captured a very natural and intense sound."

Sleeping Giant

Sleeping Giant has a great chance to kick off its career with its new label by playing the awesome Facedown Fest, which is like a family reunion of hardcore bands and fans. It's actually the seventh (or eighth) annual get-together for the label and its bands. "I'm really stoked to meet and talk with new people," states drummer Travis Boyd. "I'm hoping it will be a great opportunity to talk to kids about Christ." There's a cool urgency about kingdom business with this band, and it's cool to see. "It's really difficult to classify our music. I guess metal, southern rock, worship; that's the best I can do. Just listen to the album and you'll understand. Influences include Meshuggah, Mastodon, Blood Has Been Shed, Jesu, Minus The Bear, and Ringworm." As per the "albums that changed his life" list, it's varied: Metallica – *And Justice For All*; Meshuggah – *Nothing*; Blood Has Been Shed – *Novella Of Uriel*; and Al Green – *Greatest Hits*. "All of these metal albums changed my life, because I heard them at a point in my life when I really believed that these bands had done something truly original and done it really, really well." As for Al Green? "Well, I grew up on this album. I first heard it when I was, like, 9 and it really gave me kind of a way to find a groove in any music I listened to from that point on."

Page France

Page France is a collection of very talented and seemingly fun-loving friends. Guitarist/vocalist Michael Nau handles most of the lead vocals, but there's another band he's involved with that features Page France's keyboardist, Whitney McGraw. This band is called The Broadway Hush. Page France is currently out in support of their upcoming new album on the Suicide Squeeze label, *And The Family Telephone*. In describing their music, Nau says: "I've always just seen it as a form of pop music. I think that's the simplest way to put it." His list of influences, though, really don't offer a clue as to the Page France sound. "As for influences, I love The Kinks, The Velvet Underground, Dylan – much 60's pop, and I'm really into dub music. Growing up, I was really into Jawbreaker. It really changed the way that I view a song, in general."

Like many artists today, Page France isn't marketed into the CCM market. "Usually, for me, art and faith are part of the same mindset. Not intentionally, but I never try to seperate the two. However, I don't consider myself an artist, or a man of unwavering faith. Today's ccm world, as well as yesterday's ccm world, simply confuses me. The marketing of spirituality has creeped me out – growing up around all of that, I've seen a bunch of the (bleep) that goes on, and I simply do not understand it."

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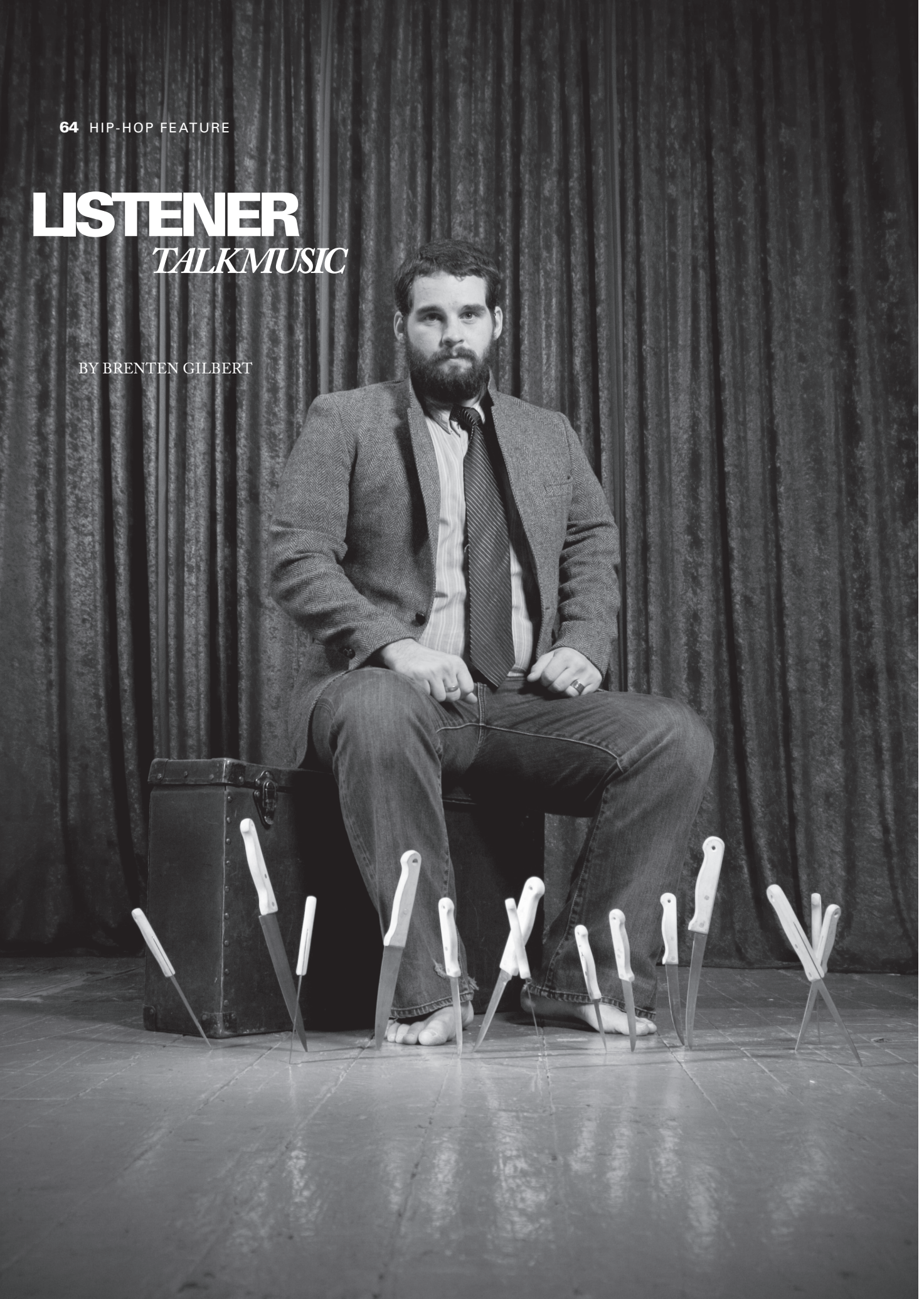
LISTENER
TALKMUSIC

BY BRENTEN GILBERT



"I've walked away from far too many rap and hip-hop shows and been like, 'Oh man. I'm tired of it.'"

I'm on the phone with Dan Smith and the conversation is just getting started. "I'm tired of being cussed at from the stage as part of every song, the rappers thinking that I need to have my hand up." Smith clearly sees a problem that exists with the perception of hip-hop. "[Rap] is a word that has kind of been, in a grand scheme, dragged through the mud and given this kind of stupid [connotation]." He continues, "[Most people] look at what's on TV to show them what rap is and they immediately think it's stupid, unintelligent, and has no meaning."

As sharp as Smith's words seem towards hip-hop, it may be surprising to learn that he's a rapper himself. Known by fans as Listener, Dan Smith has done more than just talk about the problems in hip-hop, he's been working feverishly to help correct them.

One of the key issues facing hip-hop is a failure to relate to the audience. "Even if you are doing the 'smoke and mirrors' type of show," says Listener, "[the audience] might be amused for a little bit, but they're not really paying attention to your show."

This response is understandable when many of the lyrics are self-serving. "I just can't say that my rhymes are so dope, or talk about the snare," explains Listener. "These things don't make sense to the normal person [which is why] they dance around and do the rabbit and make fun of it. They just can't relate to it."

Listener suspects that part of the problem is that most rappers are more concerned about being clever than being connected with their audience. "A lot of times [their lyrics] are just connected from the writer's brain to their mouth," he explains, before sharing his own approach. "I have a real desire and want to connect my words to my heart. I want to tell stories about heart issues and not just things that are connected to my brain."

"Train Song," from his debut solo project, *Whispermoon*, was his first foray into songwriting with a story in mind. Given the response, it was clear that he should continue to pursue that direction artistically. "I just kind of stumbled across [the song] and I put it out there, not really knowing what would happen, but [it was] a huge eye-opener because of the range of people who responded," he shares. "My mind and artistic life started to change," he continues. "I've had a criteria [since]: that I don't want to write something if it can't relate to normal people."

Building on that confirmation, Listener's next project was a concept album that is fully immersed in story. *Ozark Empire* shares the life of a businessman who gets caught up in the corporate greed and the struggles of Middle America and suffers an unfortunate outcome. "I tell the story about this traveling knife salesmen and in the end, his wife kills him with his own knife," says Listener.

However, to really connect with the audience, Listener realized that his performance environment would have to change as well. Having experimented with a few "house shows" during the off dates of touring clubs and traditional venues, he realized that those were the shows that were most memorable. "The home settings lend a more intimate setting and vibe that's more for listeners," he explains. "There's not a lot of distractions. I'm not just the entertainment for the alcohol."

With that in mind, Listener began brainstorming and he came up with an idea that he later dubbed the *Tour of Homes*. "It came to me as I was driving home from a tour and I decided to put the word out and see how many people would like to do a home show. At first, I just wanted to see how the tour might go," says Listener of the idea, "but it's gone quite well."

Many of the early dates on the *Tour of Homes* included a potluck dinner, which added to the atmosphere. "It's been a really good connection," he says. "[I perform] and afterwards we are having all of these deep conversations."

Conducting over 200 shows around the country including a short stint through Europe as part of the *Tour of Homes* initiative, Listener has found that the setting has unleashed an artistic and creative freedom that has allowed him to forge a new subgenre for hip-hop. "Hip-hop has no subgenres and I think that is kind of what is holding it back," he states.

Describing his own style, Listener continues. "What I do is hip-hop, but essentially it's spoken word to music." With lyrics that question the "norm" and speak to the heart of our earthly existence, Listener's "Talk Music" shares the ever-relevant message of redemption in a format that is impacting and accurately portrays life.

"I don't think I'm the one to fly the flag for what hip-hop needs," says Listener of his avant-garde approach to hip-hop. "But, from my perspective, what I'm doing can be helpful for hip-hop, especially for fans." If nothing else, by clarifying his presentation style (Talk Music) and connecting on a personal level with his audience, Listener is doing his part to break through the smoke and mirrors stereotype that has been hindering hip-hop for far too long.

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BEATS

[hip-hop news 'n' reviews by SphereofHipHop. com]

News shorts…

L.A. Symphony is still working on new material including, the *Unleashed Mixtape*. This project will feature new, rare, unreleased and remixes of LAS tracks. **FLYNN** is also working on some genre-bending material and has a bit of name change as well. Flynn Adam it is! This crew has consistently cranked out music that is interesting and well worth a listen. [*LASymphony.com / Myspace.com/FlynnAdam*]

RedCloud drops a new project in May, titled, *Hawthorne's Most Wanted,* on Syntax Records. He gets the chance to collaborate with longtime friend **Pigeon John** and a host of others, including several mainstream artists. Guests lined up are: Pigeon John, **Tonex**, **Def Shepard**, **Kurupt**, **The Visionaries**, **Jayo Felony** and **Eek-A-Mouse**.
[*SyntaxRecords.com*]

Who doesn't like a good rap video? I know I do and there are several noteworthy vids you should look out for. The new **Soul P.** video, for his single 'Whoa Whoa,' has hit #1 already on the Gospel Music Channel. Be sure to scope out Youtube or Beatmart.com for that one. Illect Recordings unveils their new trio of videos during GMA week. The videos include: **JustMe** 'Latenight Lullaby,' **Ajax Starglider** 'Somewhere Else' and **Cookbook & Uno Mas**'s 'Trashcan Bingo.'
[*Youtube.com / Beatmart.com / IllectRecordings.com*]

Shaun B. (of **Pinnacle Rhythms**; credits include the S.O.T.S.A. album, music production for MTV, VH1, etc.) and **Eric Lopez** (better known to most as **Drastic**, emcee of hip-hop group **The Remnant** – who brought you the *Anthem of a Life* album in 2004, and a mixtape in 2005) have combined efforts to bring you a new apparel line! Introducing: Vintage Clothing Limited! This new apparel line will feature limited edition art prints on high-end, custom made, quality apparel. Each limited edition art print shirt will be hand numbered on the label and come with a certificate of authenticity. These will be wearable art for collectors, and hard to find originals for those of us who don't like to rock what everyone else has on. These limited edition shirts are well complimented by their equally high-end, custom made, quality "signature series," which are the Vintage Clothing Limited branded everyday wear apparel. [*VintageLimited.com*]

Sphereofhiphop.com is undergoing some 2007 renovations. Look for changes and additions to the family of websites coming throughout the year. The site currently functions as an online magazine, offers hundreds of legal mp3 downloads, hosts a large library of videos, an online music store offering CDs/DVD/Vinyl and, lastly, a 2-hour radio show that broadcasts on XM Satellite Radio / DIRECTV each Saturday night. Want a free album download? Simply join the email list and details will be sent to your inbox!

FLICKER/ESSENTIAL ROCK NIGHT

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PILLAR
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RED
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NEVERTHELESS
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FLATFOOT 56
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TUESDAY APRIL 24TH 9:30PM MERCY LOUNGE
8TH AVE SOUTH IN HISTORIC CANNERY ROW
$5 AT THE DOOR FREE TO ALL GMA REGISTRANTS

What **Skinny Puppy** Says

IT'S ALWAYS AN HONOR TO INTERVIEW SOMEONE THAT HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE GENRE THEY PLAY IN. NOT EVERY DISPOSABLE BAND CAN SAY THAT, BUT MOST ANY HISTORICAL DOCUMENT ON THE INDUSTRIAL MUSIC SCENE WILL INCLUDE SKINNY PUPPY. IT'S ALWAYS COOL WHEN A SEMINAL ARTIST CAN FIND A WAY TO KEEP ON GOING AND KEEP ON CREATING AT A HIGH LEVEL, WHICH CAN ALSO BE SAID OF THIS BAND. WHAT MAKES ALL OF THESE FACTORS EVEN MORE COOL IS WHEN SAID ARTIST OPENS UP AND REALLY TALKS DURING AN INTERVIEW. READ THAT INTERVIEW BETWEEN HM EDITOR DVP AND OGRE...

First off, congratulations / major props on being an integral part of a great genre.
Oh, thank you! (laughs)

You're quite welcome. But this genre has somehow been marginalized or at best not exploded in popularity. How do you feel regarding your contributions going somewhat unnoticed?
Well, I think that… In regards to that, I think where it split ... where it became more of a hybridized nu-metal sort of thing... When industrial music kind of reached that wave or that peak of its popularity within popular culture in a way that it kind of hybridized metal into something that was more of ripping music with synthesizers now (and) became what's commonly known to us as industrial music. We kind of continued on in the same fight or flight of making what we refer to as industrial music or what I think originally was the intent of industrial music was there was no boundaries to it. It was by design and a musical composition that really defied boundaries or defied classifications. We've always kind of… Although we've kind of maintained some kind of signature sound based on the personalities involved, I think we've tried to continually change the direction of each record. Maybe much to our… probably not as far as anything like, I guess, a commercial success. We haven't tried to recreate each record in the same way and try to re-do a record that was popular or anything like that. It was really kind of something that we chose to do this on our own. As far as getting props, we've certainly had props from certain situations and certain bands, but I don't think that's really what… I don't know. Part of me kinda goes, 'Okay, yeah. Why haven't we been recognized? We've been all over the country.' Part of me now goes, 'Well, in the bigger essence of everything, it's probably the benefit of the work and in a lot of ways the benefit of the project to have a really strong cult following. It is something that, I think to an audience, it becomes something that's more special, because it hasn't really been exploited.

Yeah, good point. What is your honest assessment regarding the art of Marilyn Manson?
(clears throat) Honestly, I haven't really followed Marilyn Manson, other than just his aesthetic, which I think is really pretty wonderful. I think the people he's come in contact with – as far as where his reach has gone, as far as collaborations with different artists – has been pretty amazing. I think some of his stuff… You know, he's borrowed from a lot of sources, but everybody does. I think that his biggest sin is to not acknowledge those sources, but I think at times that just comes from insecurity and you kind of set yourself apart from the pack in a lot of ways. I think some of his music has been pretty good. At times I think his politics (are) certainly challenging. I don't know if it's benefited or … I've always kind of taken the tact of you approach somebody with ugliness, then you show kind of a very different kind of side underneath all the dressing of how you're presenting something. You're kind of causing people to look at things differently. I don't know if he's really had that effect on the public or maybe that's not the effect he wants. Other than that, I don't really know where he's at right now. I don't really know what's going on. I think that's as much – for me to say. I can't be a critic of anybody's work.

Why are the blurry lines between sanity and insanity fascinating to us as people?
Well, I think it isn't so much sanity/insanity. I think it's what scares us as normal, rational people is what fascinates us ultimately. Whether it's the fear of death, which some people spend their whole life exploring through their work... In terms of how they approach life, sometimes in a less than … less than a natural way, in a sense of taking so many chances in their life to explore death through a fear of death. I think it really comes down to our fears. I think people probably relish the idea of being insane, but are too terrified of actually letting that part of their minds take over in a lot of ways. For me, I've kind of been both challenged

and rewarded by allowing that side to take itself over and take me over a number of times in my life – to the point where I don't really have a fear of insanity, per se. I certainly know that it's a fine line between what's real and what isn't in a lot of cases. The brain's a very mysterious perceiver and the perceptive ability of people tends to shift so easily into a place where that transcendence of subjective and objective reality become pretty mixed up.

I'll say. What part of mental disease is fascinating to you? What parts of mental disease are sacred or not funny or acceptable or appropriate for exploration by artists? If any…
I don't know. I think mental disease is something… As far as what's sacred and what's unsacred, I don't think anything's really sacred, per se. I think that mental disease is something that we all share a little bit of. I think to have that kind of acceptance is what makes it all seem a little less taboo in a lot of ways. I don't really see much of it as being … something that needs to be either protected or really needs to be put out there as what it is artists are trying to explore… I think more or less artists kind of wander into those things themselves based on their own predispositions and where they're at in their own heads. I don't know if anybody's really consciously going out and trying to explore mental disease, per se. Although that's an interesting concept.

Let's pretend that you have five minutes to completely dictate world policy. You are given full authority and control and what you say goes. Starting with the war in Iraq, tell us how to solve our problems and make your changes.
Oh Lord! At this point, it's something I would probably run to the bathroom and commit suicide if I was given that opportunity at this point. I think it's a bit of a mess, because there's sectarian violence – whether it was planned or not – has been, like, propelled and has been, like, jammed up to such a degree that it becomes almost irrelevant for any outside forces trying to advert any policy. Or propagandize any policy on any kind of change over there. At times I think things were a lot better when Saddam Hussein was in power, even though that was a puppet dictatorship put in by the CIA in a lot of ways. I think that… I'd probably spend all of my time developing a time machine and go back and as articulately as possible try to throw a wrench into all of the false flag kind of operations that went on to get us to this point. And probably remove as much of the items not related to this foreign policy in the area. You may have to go back hundreds of years, because ultimately it relates back to … I think these ideas of colonialization, much the same way as the Europeans did to places like The Philippines and just the resentment of people, you know? And also just … I'd probably spend more money on just showing Americans how they're being propagandized into believing that there's some sort of American dream. I'd probably kick my presidency or whatever I am within the council of foreign relations and policy makers – they'd probably just kick my (bleep) to the ground – but probably show people the truth as to where they're really at in the world. Maybe it'll make us seem less like we need to be liberators and more like we need to look out for our own (bleep). Kind of un-tarnish that great glowing badge of North American freedom and this Western dream of, like, progress, and show it for what it really is. I don't think there's much you can do with Iraq, without taking much more of my five minutes than I should. I think the Middle East is kind of a big mess right now. I have no idea on how to solve it. I'm kinda back to when I was a child and didn't understand the whole area. Now I kind of understand it and it's like, 'Oh God!'

The tricky part about a time machine is if you went and pulled that off and you came back, you'd want to keep it under wraps as far as the existence of a time machine, wouldn't you? Because if people got ahold of that thing…
Yeah, it'd be like an amusement ride, wouldn't it? (laughs) Things would be changing all over the place – without us really knowing it. Because I think the idea of going back and changing something is people wouldn't know it. You'd just wake up one day and you'd be in this totalitarian state. "Oh! Are we?! Hello!" Maybe it's already happened!

Could be. Some people say the evidence for the non-existence of time machines is that historical photos that we have – you'd see a bunch of tourists hanging around big events.
Possibly, yeah. Or you never know, they might just be dressed up, dressed in character. Like when Syd Barrett appears at that football match with Pink Floyd. Nobody knew he was going to be there. He just appeared in the picture.

If I see some kid in a Van Halen t-shirt at the crucifixion, though, I'll be suspicious.
(laughs) Some little ragamuffin with a rag on, satan symbol.

If someone were making a movie about Skinny Puppy and there was an unlimited budget, which actors would play whom? What events in your career would the movie cover? What would be the tragic parts? What would be the comedic parts? Elaborate.
Oh my gosh! An unlimited budget for Skinny Puppy. Well, it would require massive amounts of CGI and in-depth flashbacks going nowhere. Massive amounts of speculation on why, who, and when. No one being good, no one being bad, no one being altruistic, no one being right, no one being wrong… The actors would be no-name people. Probably street people would be awesome – street people with mental deficiencies. The most tragic moments would probably be when the band actually believes they have a right to exist and were actually making a difference; and the most comedic moments would probably be the signing at American Recordings.

Nice. What do you think about Jesus Christ?
Jesus? I think he was a dissident … uh, a dissident Jew, who would probably be rolling over in his grave right now … or wherever he is. Probably on some cloud in some little ecclesiastic spring, sitting on a sling, wondering why they did that to him… He'd probably be rolling over in his grave right now with what his name represents. I think he was more of a protestor in a way – somebody who was looking at things quite differently and would almost be called a heretic now. He'd be so marginalized now. If somebody like Jesus now that came out in the same way that Jesus came out then, he'd be on some street corner warbling at the sun. Probably sitting back with a mental dysfunction. I don't think he'd be taken seriously. Other than that, I don't really know much about Jesus, per se – other than what's been written, which is kind of the glimpses of something that's been written over and over and over again and the meaning's been changed along with the times of some … a bit more politicized, a bit more propagandized. It becomes like, something to me of, 'Who's Buddha?' or 'Who's Krishna?' or who is any kind of great thinker at any one time. I guess Krishna is a little more relevant, because it is a little bit more within this time frame. It seems like he was someone that just kind of thought differently in a lot of ways. But then again, I think his thoughts have been kind of bastardized and kind of restated and kind of put into a white-minded society's eyes to something that becomes more of a loss-leader or a red herring than what the truth really is.

What do you think about His claims to be "the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father but by Me?"
Well, who's the father? (long pause) Hello?

Uh, yeah. I was waiting to see if it was a rhetorical question or not.
I'm asking you. Who's the father?

Yeah. In the context of this question, uh, Jehovah God – the God of Abraham and Isaac.
"The God of Abraham and Isaac." Who is he?

The God or Abraham or Isaac?
I know who Abraham or Isaac was, but who is the God of Abraham or Isaac?

The creator God… The Jewish God.
The Jewish God is the creator? How does that fit in with the Muslim belief?

Well, there's a split with Isaac and Ishmael that supposedly began a rift many, many years ago. And, uh… Muslims, you know, claim that the God of Abraham is Allah, apparently. And Jesus proclaimed that He was His Father, apparently.
Huh. Interesting stories. People always describe this thing to me, and I'm going, like, 'Wow. It all comes down to three or four people. It's like this little, like Kabbalah of chosen people that doesn't really make sense. I'd way rather go with the Anasazi coming down and somewhat genetically turning apes into somewhat thinking beings and using them as a way for us to harvest whatever natural resources we need off this planet and giving us this belief system, the same way the Germans were given a belief system when their country began less of a marginalized state and more into a unified country not much older than Canada, and gave them a mythological consciousness of a country or a place or a place of being within the very complex and chaotic set of systems that made us randomly created life or not. You know? I think to bring it all down to three or four people, it's just like saying George Bush and Cheney and Rumsfeld are responsible for everything going on in the world today. It doesn't really make sense to me ultimately. I guess that you have to have a leap of faith in your mind. And I don't. So, I guess, as far as Jesus saying that the way unto him… I think there's many ways to find personal salvation and personal spiritual beliefs within anything. I don't think one person's way is right or wrong. I think to hold one way as the only way, it becomes more of a tact and more of a… I don't know, it becomes more of something that you either do or you don't, which kind of takes free will out of it … and I'm a big believer of free will ultimately.

What can we expect to see and hear on the Skinny Puppy world tour that's beginning next month?
I'm looking more at the ideas of control over… It goes back to religious beliefs in the sense that there's something watching over you or there's someone watching you. Taking your thoughts and your actions and holding you accountable to things. Taking that idea and kind of expounding upon it. Maybe some of this topic, kind of in a sense that religion would be in perspective within that. From an older idea, from a less technological, pervasive idea of control in the sense of something's always inside your head, kind of watching your decisions or 'If you don't do this this way, you'll suffer some consequences.' In a lot of ways, we have that fear technologically in this society. So, I want to look at some ideas of using film and reflective surfaces and shadows and the Jungian sense of what goes on in the world.

Cool. I was going to ask how you'd incorporate that into a concert. Interesting. Well, please describe some of the process you went through in the making of Mythmaker – specifically, which parts did you hate and if you had to re-do it you would skip? And which parts did you love and would gladly do again?
Well, the process of our records is often kind of the same and we have kind of gone in and out of doing things – the more mundane ways of just tracking and layering and stuff like that – to, like, trying to experiment with more or less dis-assembling song structures and then building them up again without that kind of need to stay with the original composition. I think, for me personally, it's just like not letting my own personal life get involved in the creation of the recording; but that's pretty difficult, too. So, I think in this case I had some tumultuous issues come up in the recording of the record that kind of disabled me a little bit at certain times. Probably in the future, I wouldn't let that affect me as much as I did, but I had some emotions involved and stuff like that. Other than that, the recording process has always been – for the last 25 years – more or less the same. As far as trying to use as much of what's around you and what you take in and try to find some cohesive theme to whatever is output onto tape or onto the computer and stuff like that and trying to find some idea within it all of a concept or story in a way. I think that's in a lot of ways – even though there's a lot of problem for me in the recording of this record was what comes out at the end – the music comes out as one big explosion. It's a more cohesive kind of concept, as far as the whole record goes. You kind of see that on this recording a little more.

Some examples of attention to detail might be obvious – like lyrics and others are more subtle, like video direction or which letters get capitalized on the song listing for the back of the CD packaging. How much attention to detail…
There was no time taken for that. (laughs)

None?
None. Not really. I mean, spelling and plays on words? Maybe, but those things come pretty quickly to you. You're listening and you kind of go, 'Oh wow. That's pretty cool.' But attention to detail? There's a certain amount of attention to detail when it comes down to the actual mixing and the actual fitting everything within a frequency range and finding that balance, so there's nothing that really pops out. There's nothing that really sounds blended. That's more of where the real detail comes in. Certain things, like when it comes to chopping vocals and things like that, that's pseudo detail work. That's also a particular rhythmic and a natural thing, too. But I think the real detail stuff comes in the mixing and getting it to its final stage. The visual stuff is kind of, again, something that we concentrate on and something that we'll concentrate (more) on probably on this tour than we did even the last tour, but there's broad concepts that we get down and we kind of let other people work on. Like, on the last tour, they had their own way with it.

Who are the masters – both recognized and not – of the industrial rock genre?
Oh, I have no idea! The masters? I really don't know. The industrial rock thing is such a small… I'd have to say that someone that came out of the industrial world, but is probably a bit more of a pop writer, but was certainly influenced by it would have to be Trent from Nine Inch Nails. Obviously Throbbing Gristle, for just being at its conceptual core in a lot of ways. I think all the bands that we've been into – whether it's Nocturnal Emissions or the original 400 Blows or … there's so many things. You know, SPK, all that stuff they were kind of at different times were still masters for the whole genre. I think we're kind of one of the seminal bands that've kind of stayed on with it. I really wouldn't call us masters or anything.

If you were teaching a college course for capable artists, what would be the opening lines in your Industrial Music Creating 101 lecture?
Uh. Well, I'd probably, again, define the ideas and the differences between the perception of industrial music in modern culture as opposed to what its basic root was. And the idea of composition with no boundaries would probably be really high on the list.

What do you think happens to a person's spirit, body, or soul the moments after their death?
I've (got) kind of a bunch of ideas about that, because when I was young I had an experience where recently after my father died I was with some people who had a pretty strong spiritual psychic vibe to them and we ended up making a ouiji board on the table and letters and paper and I ended up talking to my father. I wasn't facilitating it. I wasn't even touching the glass and it was a very odd experience for me that made me kind of wonder about the idea of 21 grams and the idea of energy kind of assumes basic physics of how energy never really disappears. It just kind of transfers into something else. I had this idea then that there's a presence that stays around, because the energy is so tightly grouped together and it just dissipates over time back into everything else in the universe. That's kind of… It's not very well-founded in any sort of factual science, but it's kind of a feeling I have about what happens to us. I don't really believe in the idea of a place that you go to, necessarily. Ultimately, your brain shuts down and you may have a certain number of experiences as that process plays itself out biologically. I think there's… coming to the idea of, like, within us there's something – whether it's like the idea of consciousness and the intellectual side of the brain itself and how it functions, but there's something beyond just kind of like what's perceiving in our bodies. Something that kind of sits about that. I haven't really figured that out yet. The older I get the less I really know about it. There's something about a consciousness, that to me is an energy that doesn't just dissipate when the body dies. Although, I think it does dissipate in the sense that it does mix with everything else. I do believe that there's something more within all living things that needs more than just eat, (bleep), (bleep) and sleep.

Ugly, mean and hypocritical things have been well documented. What's the most beautiful thing you've seen a Christian do?
The most beautiful thing I've ever seen a Christian do is be non-judgmental. Those are real Christians to me. I've definitely seen a few. I've had a few in my life. My ex-wife's mother is a good example of someone that has some beliefs that I don't necessarily agree with, but she's very open to kind of accepting to other people without being judgmental. I think, to me, the most beautiful thing I've ever – and it's rare, to be honest with you – in my understanding of the way that I've definitely been treated with some of the beliefs that I have is to find Christians that are non-judgmental, which I think is the basis for what Christianity was all about.

"...there's something beyond just kind of like what's perceiving in our bodies. Something that kind of sits about that. I haven't really figured that out yet.."

How would you describe the most fulfilling show – either through past events or ideally?
Well, for me, it's (when) something thematically is flowing. I think the most fulfilling show to me – to cut a long story short – is something that ultimately goes by and continues to be very interesting to perform. It sucks when you're doing things that aren't working or as effective as you thought they'd be and it becomes a bit of a drain and a moodkill. The really fulfilling performances are the ones where everything goes by and works out exactly the way you had planned and has the overall effect on the audience in a lot of ways. I've certainly gone through that process with Skinny Puppy. I've seen peeks.

Anything else you'd like to add?
No. Not really. If you've got any more questions, that's cool.

I appreciate your time today.
Yeah, man.

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RETHINKING CHURCH

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARS HILL PASTOR ROB BELL BY VIC CUCCIA

ROB BELL IS THE PASTOR OF MARS HILL BIBLE CHURCH, ONE OF THE LARGEST AND FASTEST GROWING CHURCHES IN AMERICA. HOWEVER, THIS IS NO RUN-OF-THE-MILL MEGA CHURCH. FOR STARTERS, IT TOOK US FOREVER TO FIND THE PLACE. WE HAD THE PHYSICAL ADDRESS, BUT DROVE BY IT THREE TIMES BEFORE REALIZING THAT IT WAS IN AN OLD MALL. IT IS CURIOUS THAT A CHURCH WITHOUT EVEN A SMALL SIGN COULD GROW TO OVER EIGHT THOUSAND PEOPLE. THE MINISTRY OF MARS HILL IS WHAT DRAWS THE CROWD, AND THEY DEFINITELY DO NOT JUDGE THEIR EFFECTIVENESS BY THE SIZE OF THEIR STEEPLE, OR SIGN FOR THAT MATTER.

Vic Cuccia: I heard somewhere that you play guitar and you were once in a punk band. Is that true?
Rob Bell: I'm a total hack musician. In college I was in a band. I cut my teeth on Primus, Chili Peppers, Pixies, Violent Femmes, Midnight Oil… I had a band with my best friends, called Ton Bundle. We were underage, so we would get gigs at clubs and wait in the alley until it was time to go on, so that we wouldn't get carded. We would run on, do the fastest sound check ever and play. I was the lead singer … I did a whole James Brown thing, I would start to faint and fall over and they would bring a cape out … it was nuts.

Did you guys ever tour?
No we didn't. Our senior year of college the band fell apart and broke all of our hearts. The breakup of the band was actually me saying, "I've got to go to Seminary and be a Pastor."

Now you are a Pastor of one of the largest churches in America. Are there any similarities that you can draw on from be the lead singer in a band to being a Pastor?
Well, when you're in a band, if you aren't connecting with people they leave… So when I did my first sermons I asked the question; why would we spend time doing something that isn't great? Nowhere else in your life do you give your time to things that aren't great. You don't go sit through movies that you don't like. You don't pay for things that aren't of a certain caliber, that compel you in a certain way. So when I got into teaching, my assumption was that the Jesus revolution ought to be the best thing going. To this day I meet people who go to church because they're supposed to. I absolutely cannot comprehend that… You don't do that – you take that CD out and put another CD in – I don't get it. So back to the question, I guess being in a band has shaped me in some profound ways.

So now you are the Pastor of Mars Hill Church, why did you choose that name?
Mars Hill comes from Acts 17. There was this hill in the city of Athens where the philosophers, thinkers and poets would exchange all the latest ideas… My assumption is always that a Christian is not hanging out in some sort of anemic little subculture with C-grade art and music. They are in the middle of everything, exchanging ideas and they are humble and smart about it. They aren't just out offending people, telling them that they are wrong; but they actually love people enough to engage them where they are at. So, Mars Hill was built on this assumption that a church should be at the center of culture engaging with whatever the latest ideas are.

From being here on Sunday I would guess there is somewhere between 8,000 to 10,000 people who are a part of Mars Hill. What is it that makes Mars Hill different than your typical mega church?
I am as skeptical of the mega church as anybody. We've just simply asked, "all these people have gathered, so what are we going to do?" We are going to try to draw attention to all of the causes and people who have no voice and no one is listening to. So we are going to try to help single moms, people in poverty, people who have lost their job, people who nobody will listen to.

…I think when people say they don't like mega churches; I think people are scared because they know that when things get big their natural arc is to be all about themselves, so you're building bigger buildings, etc. Like yesterday, I was talking about Marilyn Manson, "it's all relative to the size of your steeple..." it just becomes this giant ego show. We just try to strip it all away. What is this beautiful thing that we are all compelled by? Let's pursue that.

Tell me about the "Everything is Spiritual Tour." What was it and how did you come up with it?
I started working on this thing called "Everything is Spiritual" three years ago and it was like a sermon on steroids, but it didn't fit in any of the mediums

that I usually work in. So I told a friend of mine who is in a band, "I have this idea to do a club tour." Also, we had a lot people asking, when are you coming to Seattle? Dayton? Florida?

So my friend said, I'll hook you up with a guy who can book all the venues. I did it in July with my family and it was just awesome. You wake up every morning in a new city and each night I would do the talk. We filmed it, so it will be out as a film in a little while. We gave all the [ticket] money to WaterAid, which is a British organization that builds sustainable water systems for people who have no drinking water. That's wrong and we think it pisses Jesus off, that people don't have water, so we are trying to do something about it. I just loved it, we are going to do it again.

I actually caught the Jacksonville stop.
Laughing… Jacksonville was the one where the train came by and I had to stop for about a minute. It was crazy … a couple of the clubs were just full-on punk clubs with the low ceilings and smell like the end of the world and I just couldn't have been happier. Some of those clubs I would walk into and be like, 'I would rather be nowhere else than here tonight.' It's things like that, that get you back to why you do what you do. I mean, I can hang out here in Grand Rapids in this huge church and that is wonderful, but a couple hundred people in Jacksonville … that's awesome, I just loved it.

As a pastor what would you say to someone who has become disillusioned with organized church or what they have seen of Christianity?
I would wager that the things that most turn them off are the things that most turn Jesus off. There is not one instance in Jesus' teachings where He gets angry with somebody who isn't a follower of His or someone who doesn't love God. His anger is always for religious people who claim to speak for God but live in another way. So if you find hypocrisy absolutely revolting, so did Jesus. If you find people who think they are the moral police of culture repulsive, so did Jesus. If you find people who are ready to throw stones at the next sinner very hard to take, so did Jesus. And if you think that people who use Jesus to accumulate political power, to coerce people to live according to their laws, well Jesus had a problem with such things as well. I would say that your anger is shared by Jesus.

It is my understanding that a few weeks ago you got very sick and were not able to speak on Sunday so you decided to show an interview with Bono and Bill Hybels, talking about faith and the AIDS pandemic, instead of doing a regular sermon. How did people respond to that?
We got great feedback, people were just like, "That was so awesome." What most thrilled me is the number of people who were like, "Yeah, we have been hearing that, that is what it really means to be a Christian." That made me really proud of our people. That is how God is and that is where God's story always goes – to those who are poor and oppressed – it always goes there. He was born in a manger, how much more do we need?

Very true. Okay, last question: what is at the top of your iPod list these days?
Early Police – *Zenyatta Mondatta*, *Reggatta de Blanc*, *Outlandos d'Amour*. Beastie Boys *Ill Communication* has been getting a lot of spins lately, and my six year old is all over the Jay-Z unplugged album. But I am obsessed with British bands, so everything from Doves, who I think are the greatest ever, to Athlete, Starsailor, Ash and Charlatans. I love that stuff…

Sweet…thanks so much for your time
No problem.

✖

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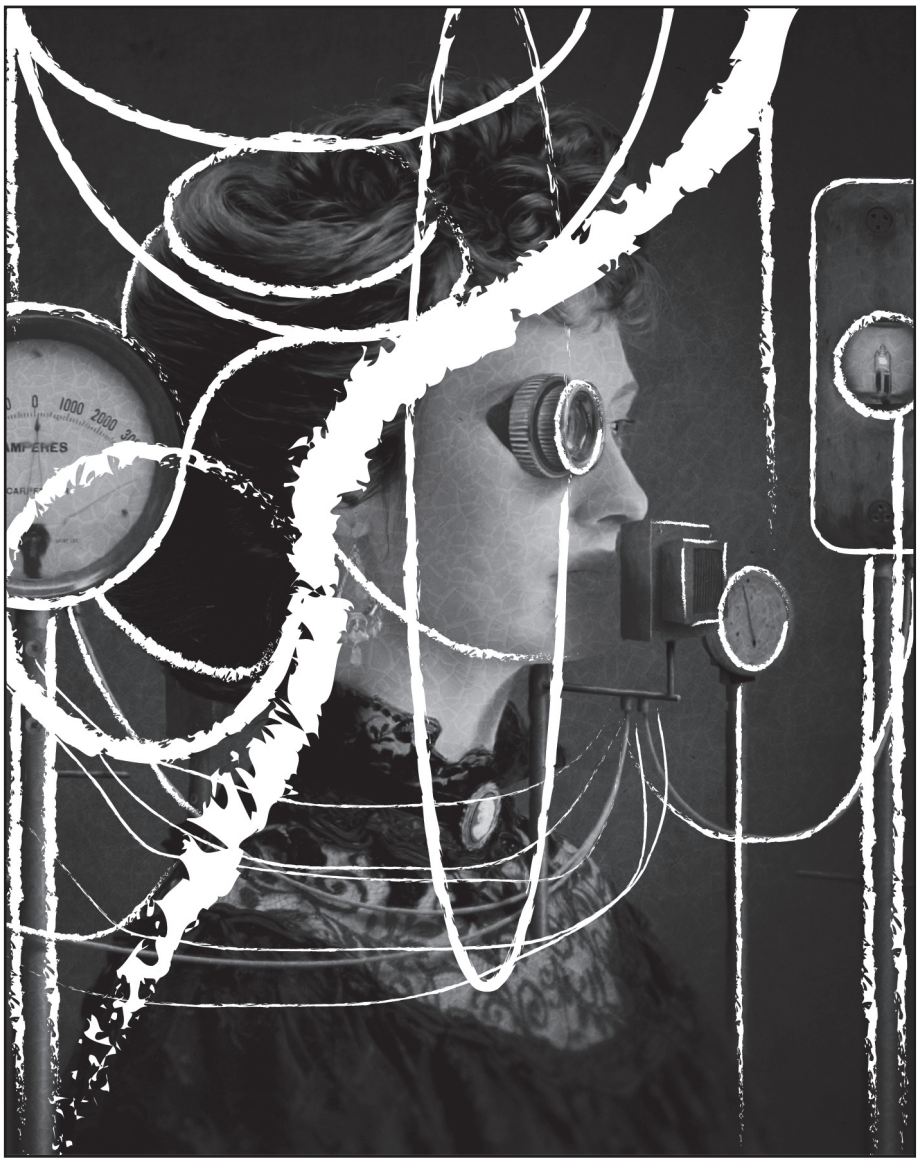

Rating system

05 *CLASSIC*
04 *FABULOUS*
03 *SOLID*
02 *SUSPECT*
01 *AMISS*
***** *1/2*

THE CHARIOT

THE FIANCEE

Josh Scogin must possess the Midas touch. His first major venture, vocalist for Norma Jean, worked. He got a new band, called it The Chariot, wrote a record, and it worked. He switched members, his next EP worked. He switched more members, and the band's latest release with The Chariot, The Fiancee, works overtime.

The Chariot – Scogin's post-Norma Jean brainchild – released their debut record in late-2004, called *Everything is Alive, Everything is...* blah blah blah the entire title might take longer to say than the actual length of the record. The anticipation was huge – it being the first record since Scogin's departure from the revolutionary Norma Jean – and when it finally dropped, it seemed to polarize audiences. Some fell in love with it immediately; some couldn't take all the extra feedback.

After an EP, The Chariot has come back with *The Fiancee* – it's gold, and it's because Scogin touched it. The band is entirely new – save for Scogin – and it doesn't seem to matter. The very base of what forms The Chariot must still be there, because *The Fiancee* only expands and elaborates on what The Chariot produced over two years ago on their debut record.

The record begins with 10 seconds of pure noise, as loud and as screeching as possible. Welcome to the first track – and you almost immediately have to say goodbye; you only get a little over a minute to savor it before the record moves on to "They Faced Each Other." The first three songs are like riding a roller coaster in a tornado, and The Chariot is begging you to hang on.

Stick it out and you'll be rewarded. Get to "And Shot Each Other" and the ending has a creepy choir that begins an eerie echo that seems to permeate the rest of the record. "The Deaf Policeman" is incredible: ➡

when you think the band is going to stop, they keep going; when you think they're going to venture down a certain path, they turn the opposite direction. "Then Came to Kill" has this wicked bell tolling in the background, just loud enough to set that imminent-death feel. But don't expect them to harp on it too long. Don't expect them to harp on anything too long. Which brings on the only drawback to the album: It's short. It's almost like a tease. They're giving you this quick taste of what The Chariot is. But let's put it this way: If the length of the record is just the tip of The Chariot's iceberg, the meat of *The Fiancee'* could easily sink the Titanic. ~~[SOLID STATE] DAVID STAGG~~

THE ALMOST
SOUTHERN WEATHER

Who ever knew that it would be the drummer of Underoath to be the one to release an album as a side project? Nevertheless, the redheaded Aaron Gillespie has become another entity known as The Almost for his debut album *Southern Weather*. After temporarily kicking over his drummer's stool, Gillespie took to the front of the stage with a guitar in hand and played virtually every instrument for his album sans guest performances from Jeremy Enigk (Sunny Day Real Estate, The Fire Theft) and Kenny Vasoli (The Starting Line). However, more help was appropriately recruited through acclaimed producer Aaron Sprinkle, who undoubtedly helped buffer the tracks to a new shine. Not too far into the album, it is clear that this album is not just another appendage of his full time band. In fact, it's safe to say that the steel guitar in "Dirty And Left Out" or subtle acoustics of "Amazing Because It Is" would be lynch mobbed in a screamo mosh pit, but that's not the point. Gillespie's vocals is Underoath's not-so-secret weapon, in which he unapologetically turns every chorus into a mandatory empathetic sing-along. So for this entire album, every track brilliantly carries that same sweeping melody that hooks the listener along for a ride and never once lets them go.
~~[TOOTH & NAIL / VIRGIN] DAN FRAZIER~~

MEANS
SENDING YOU STRENGTH

Hailing from the prairie city of Regina, Canada, the foursome known as Means solidifies the Great White North as a reliable source for quality hardcore metal. On their third release, *Sending You Strength*, the band joins the Facedown family with twelve solid tracks whose intense intro growls and striking intensity can cause lacerations. But what spotlights Means from the rest of the black t-shirt cladded crowd is their ability to seamlessly interlace reviving fragments of guitarist/vocalist Matt Goud's melodic vocals and supportive lyrics that will help stitch back up even the deepest wound. ~~[FACEDOWN] DAN FRAZIER~~

MAYLENE & THE SONS OF DISASTER
II

If Maylene and the Sons of Disaster were a boxer and this album were the next stage of their career, they are headed for a title. The self-titled debut album of late 2005 had it all: a straight-up knockout punch, killer packaging that looked like a well-worn vinyl sleeve, and a strong live show to back it all up. It was like they came out of nowhere and quickly got everyone's attention. Something this cool was supposed to be on Tooth & Nail, not some Nashville-based label called Mono vs. Stereo. It wasn't like they invented a new sound, but the passion, grit and performance all came across as totally fresh. This follow-up, unpretentiously called *II* (unless you call following in the footsteps of Led Zeppelin pretentious), starts where their debut ended and ups the ante ever so slightly with a little bit bigger and wetter production. If confidence is a sound that could be measured, there'd be a few pounds of it on this album. They still sound just like they look: dirty, Southern, and mean. They seem to be setting their own trend, putting a cool, retrospective and pretty ballad like "Tale Of The Runaways" near the end a la "Just Wanted To Make Mother Proud." It's hard to pick a standout cut, as tunes like "Memories of the Grove," "Dry The River" and "Raised by the Tide" rock so heartily. One can't help but smile over the repeated refrain of the latter: "We can't help but be blessed / when you've been raised by God's finest." This album is simply great. ~~[FERRET/MONO VS. STEREO] DOUG VAN PELT~~

THE INNOCENCE MISSION
WE WALKED IN SONG

Innocence Mission arrived just in time. The Lancaster, PA band fronted by married team of songwriter/singer Karen and guitarist Don Peris, showed up at the pre-*Lilith Faire* frenzy for arty, airy alternative pop featuring female vocalists. It was a time marked by 10,000 Maniacs (the Peris' went on to perform a song on Natalie Merchant's *Ophelia* disc), Over the Rhine, Sam Phillips, and Bjork. After three acclaimed albums, that garnered mainstream and Christian industry attention, including landing a track on the *Empire Records* movie soundtrack, the Peris' pulled back to focus on family and faith, but the music kept coming, available largely online. So, while they've still been producing discs, *We Walked in Song* is the most accessible and compelling collection since 1995's *Glow*. Intimate, quiet, poetic and wistful, Karen Peris' songs very genuinely offer a glimpse into an earlier, more innocent and childlike time. Or maybe they just embody a world very different from the too very busy, wired and weird urban existence that I know all too well. With a mystic's sense of wonder, she sings of the "Colors of the World," where "this bit of yellow could be a leaf, or a beam of light, a girl in a taxi." Simple, soulful expressions dominate over gentle guitar overlays, the subtle addition of piano and bass, the occasional drum. "Into Brooklyn, Early in the Morning" has a Mamas & the Papas feel, but like the whole of the record it feels as though it is floating in another realm, one not too burdened with the daily challenges of modern existence, even as it reflects on an early morning flight. My one disappointment comes from a theological and linguistic commitment to use language that is gender inclusive, so that all people are included. "Brotherhood of Man," a lovely song about community and human connections, need not be limited by male-dominant words, but it is. ~~[BADMAN] BRIAN QUINCY NEWCOMB~~

THESE 5 DOWN
FRICTION

The long wait for this Michigan quintet's sophomore album is finally over with *Friction*. Many HM fans might not remember this mask-wearing outfit that sounded as aggro and intense as Mudvayne and Slipknot's more chaotic moments, but they brought it live – savagely and severely. The dynamics between the calm, almost-speaking parts and the distorted, shrill screams are capable of causing that wonderful kind of "metal" nerve damage. Not every song tilts the whirl, but when these guys are on, it's scary. ~~[THE MOMENTUM LABEL] DOUG VAN PELT~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
The Chariot *The Fiance*	04	04*
The Almost *Southern Weather*	03*	04
Means *Sending You Strength*	03*	04
Maylene & the Sons... *II*	04	
The Innocence Mission *We Walked In Song*	04	02*
These 5 Down *Friction*	03*	
Gary Murray *The Revenant Waltz*	03	03
Lenny *We Are Criminals*	03	
TobyMac *Portable Sounds*	04	03
Jason Gray *All The Lovely Losers*	03	02*
All Star United *Love & Radiation*	03	03*
Johnny Cash *Ultimate Gospel*	04*	03
BRMC *Baby 81*	04	

GARY MURRAY

THE REVENANT WALTZ

One of the most over looked, underrated bands from the past few years has got be LN. The now defunct Ohio-based slow core outfit was a critical success, but it didn't seem to get much past that. Now we see the solo debut of LN front man Gary Murray. *The Revenant Waltz* finds Murray sticking pretty close to his LN roots, albeit a much more stripped down version. The five songs (4 originals and one Dylan cover) on …*Waltz* are minimal in their instrumentation, often featuring only a guitar or piano along with Murray's steady tenor vocals. A must for fans of Mark Kozelek (Red House Painters). The songs themselves are a somber look at love and loneliness. Perfect for sitting on the front porch late at night, reflecting on the past, and turning out the light. ~~[VELVET BLUE MUSIC] DOUG GIESBRECHT~~

LENNY

WE ARE CRIMINALS

This is the part of the review where I'm supposed to show my fellow journalist hacks how ruthless I can be in shredding this band's lack of originality and how they sound like a cross between Dashboard Confessional and any of your other favorite emo radio-friendly stars. Or, conversely, here is where I sympathize with this pair of youngsters and wax poetic about how far above their years they are writing and performing. While any judge would take off points for: the melodies of "Rapture," the straining vocal lines of "Hope," or when the bottom drops out and it's only acoustic guitar supplying the background to the story and load of advice in "Take It On The Chin" as all seems to pay homage to the great Chris Carraba; this album might just find its life support from the ears that count the most – music lovers that are craving songs like food. Even though "Everything's Changing" sounds as hollow as a home studio will behave sometimes, it captures an energy that works almost effectively. This ain't a half bad album. Most of these 8 songs stand strong enough to warrant pressing that "repeat" button. ~~[THE MOMENTUM LABEL] DOUG VAN PELT~~

TOBYMAC

PORTABLE SOUNDS

Is there anybody in Christian music better connected and better able to give the kids what they want, than Toby McKeehan? He's already proved he was the real creative driving force in DC Talk, even though he wasn't the "singer" (he wasn't the moody 'cute one' or the 'Black one'), but with now three post-supergroup solo outings, he was obviously the talented one. And does anybody have their finger more on the pulse of R&B influenced pop radio than this energetic, true believer? I don't think so. tobyMac is the real deal: the music mogul that gave us Relient K and Grits, and he lays down funky grooves that will tear up any dancefloor, and these are good songs to boot. Okay, one problem: You can wear the weird British cap or the forgot to shave under my lip soul patch, but you can't wear both. Even tobyMac can't have it all. But, again, on *Portable Sounds* he gets darn close. Oh these aren't the most original sounds you're ever going to hear, but they manage to press the formula from *Momentum* and *Welcome to Diverse City* to the next level… and once this party gets started only the hardcore disenchanted won't want to smile and groove along. Now, this music, if you're like me… more cerebral (can't dance) or rock-inclined (need more than the occasional screaming guitar fill)… can wear thin after a while. But it's perfect for that Saturday night get together, and theologically it never forgets to remind us that we are "Made to Love," and that means not just people like us, but corrects that thinking by revealing that all people are truly like us, and we ought to get over our bad selves, and join the party. Most days, I can get down with that. ~~[FOREFRONT] BRIAN QUINCY NEWCOMB~~

JASON GRAY

ALL THE LOVELY LOSERS

Technically, the singer/songwriter genre Jason Gray inhabits is already overcrowded and the last thing we need is another Christian wordsmith. Consider song titles like "Blessed Be" and "Sing Through Me" and it seems you already know what you're in for. But Gray's *All The Lovely Losers* is oddly compelling, evoking a musical tenderness reminiscent of Bebo Norman on tracks like "Everything I Own" and a solid musicianship that lets each track keep playing. "The Cut," featuring Sara Groves, is the highlight here wrought with lyrical emotion and an acoustic balladry that actually gives way to an electric solo. "Blessed Be" is a solid lead track that is formulaic yet enjoyable all the same. *All The Lovely Losers* definitely stays the course charted before it, but it still merits a listen. ~~[CENTRICITY] MATT CONNER~~

ALL STAR UNITED

LOVE & RADIATION

Don't call it a comeback… Even if, like me, you're wondering where Ian Eskelin and his latest pack of backing All Stars have been; the return of these cheeky, too witty, too smart for their own good, power pop, bubblepunk rockers is so good, you'll immediately forgive them for time spent AWOL. ASU has always been the perfect blend of insight and attitude, songcraft and rock star moves. I once saw ASU completely ambush a bunch of lazy Christian college students at a pop/worship festival, and rock their socks off, only to return to encore a cover of Blur's triumphant and, at that time, omnipresent hit, "Song 2." The kids didn't know they were listening to that year's best rock song anywhere, because it's not on a Caedmon's Call CD… and Eskelin, who often manages more than his fair share of ironies in the fire, managed to turn it into a revelatory, worshipful and transforming moment. Go figure. And the show just goes on and on. Here, on "Song of the Year," "Let's Rock Tonight" and "We Could Be Brilliant," they exploit the cliches of rock music and faith chatter, to create something far more substantive and meaningful than you expect on the surface. Talk about being surprised by joy. On "Jesus on the Radio" they counter the pop myth of subliminal evangelism by using subliminal evangelism… these guys are crafty. ~~[7 SPIN] BRIAN QUINCY NEWCOMB~~

JOHNNY CASH

ULTIMATE GOSPEL

I came to Jesus because I'm a sinner. Poppin' pills, smokin' dope ... and that was just the beginning. I was a liar, a thief, an adulterer, and a killer. Jesus doesn't make me feel happy or put a smile on my face, He literally saved my life and set me free, forgiving me of all my shame. I don't have any misgivings about my so-called worth. I follow a Man that took my place and paid for my crimes. I cherish and cling to the cross. I'm delighted to think of the dark and smelly places this digital collection of old Gospel standards will find itself. All of the garages, parlors and places that skinny suburban kids are too intimidated to venture. This simple singer was tried and true ... and people felt that in his voice. When even Billy Graham and a local church become too white color for a man, in walks Johnny Cash with the message of salvation. I love that. ~~[COLUMBIA/LEGACY] KERN COUNTY KID, THE~~

BRMC

BABY 81

Black Rebel Motorcycle Club is in a dangerous place. They're one of the coolest bands in rock, but people grow jealous of success – even if it's only dealing in the currency of cred. Wearing sunglasses indoors will only get you by for so long, though. With their fourth album, they've got to earn any notice they can in our growing A.D.D. world. With a consistency matched by only a few, they've pulled off another album worthy of acclaim. Having experimented with some of the rootsier side of rock with *Howl*, *Baby 81* returns to more of the fuzzy buzzrock they delivered on their self-titled debut and 2003's *Take Them On On Your Own*. What's amazing is how they can continue to straddle such a wide range of sound. "Weapon Of Choice" sounds as bratty as anything coming out of NYC and the piano driven "Window" or the tambourine-smacking "It's Not What You Wanted" could've easily been a Lennon-penned and sung Beatles song. In "Killing The Light," they show their prowess at being as commercial and smart as a Collective Soul. If this enigmatic band has thus far eluded your music collection, it's time to fix that. ~~[RCA] DOUG VAN PELT~~

SHERWOOD
A DIFFERENT LIGHT

A musical magician approaches his workbench with a gleeful smile. But when he pulls out his collection of components, the scientist realizes that there's not enough time to experiment with eclectic elixirs or with tricky tonal tinctures. That kind of aural alchemy requires more care, attention, and creativity than he's allowed at this moment. So instead, he reaches for the tried-and-true elements that have driven up iTunes downloads for most of this decade. Into the mixing bowl of internet hype, the sonic sorcerer tosses in equal measurements of the trite romantic lyricism of Dashboard Confessional and the catchy radio-pop hooks of Jimmy Eat World. After stirring thoroughly, the concoction is heated at a temperature of 55,000 friends over the marketing power and cultural omnipresence of the MySpace Bunsen burner. And when complete, the mixture turns the color of dollar-bill green, pleasing the ears of 14-to-20-year old girls everywhere. ~~[MYSPACE RECORDS] ADAM NEWTON~~

FLATFOOT 56
JUNGLE OF THE MIDWEST SEA

Not so much mom, baseball and apple pie... more like Clan / Football (soccer) / Corned beef and cabbage / Celtic / Punk / Oi! / *Good Will Hunting* / fighting / Dropkick Murphys / chants / sea chantys / justice / fancy pants punchin / fields of green / sacrifice / three chords / Conan O'Brien / pint / bagpipes / The Pogues / kilts / beads of sweat / sing-a-longs / shout-a-longs / shamrock shakes / the cross / double-time jigs / city streets / mandolin / Chicago (south side) / Daniel Day Lewis / Friggin Huge / amazing grace / fan base / boots / The Clash / top of your lungs / blood / cousin Paddy / rumble / church gigs / club gigs / PUB GIGS! / remember that war / remember that fight / fight the good fight / shine His light / how do ya like dem apples? ~~[FLICKER] PAUL Q-PEK~~

WIDOWS & ORPHANS
EVERYTHING IS GOLD

Widows&Orphans are self-proclaimed "impossible to categorize," and on the surface, I'd be inclined to agree with them. They do run a gamut of sorts – from a cappella pop to emo to hardcore – but it all remains within a certain style. It's not a bad thing, but it wouldn't take an average fan two seconds to compare them to someone else. That said, I don't particularly care who they're compared to, they have produced one of the more creative records I've heard in a long time. The six-piece band hailing from Austin, TX used to be known as The Kirby. Under that moniker, they built a solid following around Austin, expanding into Texas and the southeast, releasing three EPs, touring with powerhouses like Showbread, Horse the Band, and Society's Finest, eventually adding three new members and opting to change their name. Their history doesn't die with the new name; in fact, the band embraced it and re-recorded five tracks from old EPs, as well as putting up five brand new ones for their first official full-length release, *Everything is Gold*. The title is meant to encourage the listener to view things in a different way; the opening lyrics to the album: "Everything is gold if you look at it the right way / Do you see me in the right way?" The song itself is easily a high point to the record. It's entirely a cappella and showcases the band's versatility and songwriting abilities. But just as you're getting comfortable with the sound, the band rips into their first single, "We Are All Exiles," and forces you to view them in a different way. I'd imagine this is exactly what they want, and it happens frequently on the record. Right when you're getting comfortable with what they're playing, you've got to shift your thinking. The ending breakdown on "Exiles" does it, "All Hail the Phantom Armada" begins with an operatic feel, moving into a computerized, '80s vocals movement, before moving back to a breakdown, and "Jenny's Got Some Backbone" represents their most common sound: fast-paced guitar stylings and harmonies with stream-of-consciousness vocals. *Everything is Gold* is a fun listen – seeing the band live is equally a treat – and the artwork to the record is stellar. And although the record is creative, it sometimes feels like it tries too hard. The band is obviously coming into its own, and as such, will demand the attention that equals their efforts. For fans of mewithoutYou. ~~[DOLLHOUSE] DAVID STAGG~~

SEVENTH DAY SLUMBER
FINALLY AWAKE

Some days I long for a musical Martin Luther to rise up and nail some creative version of the 95 Theses on the doors of record labels everywhere, calling the sonic artisans of our generation to craft something meaningful. Usually these moments creep in when listening to an album like *Finally Awake*, the latest release from copy-rockers Seventh Day Slumber. At least if you're going to outright copy what has been done, then do it very well (i.e. Daughtry). Instead, *Awake* sounds like a copy of a copy, with any semblance of listening pleasure lost in the process. Lead single "Missing Pages" and "Undone" both sound like a Nickelback B-side, while others, like "Awake," have such a dated sound that they might as well sport leather pants and teased bangs. All in all, there's not an original thought or note to be found on *Finally Awake*. ~~[BEC] MATT CONNER~~

SOLOMON BURKE
NASHVILLE

When Solomon Burke sings about playing the love game until he masters it (during "'Till I Get It Right)," it is a startling revelation. If this octogenarian is still clueless about the mysteries of love, maybe we are all hopeless romantics. Of course, it is just a song. But Burke is not just any singer. Rather, he's a minister and a soul legend who recently hooked up with producer Buddy Miller for this country-esque new CD. Although he is joined by country star power, such as Dolly Parton and Patty Loveless, he is at his best on stripped down selections – namely the acoustic guitar w/vocal "How I Got To Memphis" and the hushed "Up On The Mountain" – which reveal this iconic voice's vulnerable side. Burke doesn't huff and puff and blow your house down with this effort, although he certainly could if he wanted to. He whispers sweet wisdom in your ear, instead. ~~[SHOUT! FACTORY] DAN MACINTOSH~~

BLESS THE FALL
HIS LAST WALK

The Phoenix quintet known as Blessthefall fluidly marries an epic wall of sound executing screamo crescendos severed by metalcore breakdowns on their debut album, *His Last Walk*. Acting as protégés to their hometown brethren Greeley Estates, they seamlessly direct their music's direction by using vocalist Craig Mabbitt's alternating melodic soars and retching screeches as a marker. But like an unrelenting onslaught of a stampede falling over a cliff, the album can wear down as a bit too repetitive. Nevertheless, these tracks prove that these transgender-haircut teens are only warming up and show promise of something much more grand to come. ~~[SCIENCE] DAN FRAZIER~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Sherwood *A Different Light*	03	01*
Flatfoot 56 *Jungle Of The Midwest Sea*	04	03
Widows & Orphans *Everything Is Gold*	03	03*
Seventh Day Slumber *Finally Awake*	03	01
Solomon Burke *Nashville*	03	03*
Bless The Fall *His Last Walk*	04	04
The Holmes Brothers *State Of Grace*	03	04
Mavis Staples *We'll Never Turn Back*	03	04
The Wedding *Polarity*	03*	03*
Joy Electric *Workmanship*	03	03
Maria McKee *Late December*	03*	03
Comeback Kid *Broadcasting...*	03	
Waking Ashland *The Well*	03*	03
xDeathstarx *We Are The Threat*	04	

THE HOLMES BROTHERS

STATE OF GRACE

The Holmes Brothers are so masterful at their distillation of country, blues and soul into an epitome of American roots music – and have been at it for so long – that their excellence can be easy for longtime fans to take for granted. Then they'll go and change things up so as to make listeners think again. Morphing Elvis Costello's oldie, "(What's So Funny 'Bout) Peace, Love and Understanding?," into folky solemnity (?) that you could have maybe seen coming. Flipping Cheap Trick's "I Want You To Want Me" into elegiacally raw piano pop is altogether unexpected. Though the good-natured line about the Lone Ranger smooching Tonto's posterior in Lyle Lovett's "If I Had A Boat" won't get the Holmeses the soul gospel radio attention "I've Just Seen The Rock Of Ages" ought, a rendition of Lovett's' "God Will" without a detectable whit of the tall-haired Texan's sarcasm is a tad off-putting. A Cajun hoedown setting for Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Bad Moon Rising" anticipates the apocalypse wth glee. The guys' originals this time tackle the despairs of romance with pained and wry smiles. *State Of Grace* may not be the band's third all-gospel set, but the love of the Lord plays into the Brothers' party as much as that of a good woman, no matter how she probably done them wrong.
[ALLIGATOR] JAMIE LEE RAKE

MAVIS STAPLES

WE'LL NEVER TURN BACK

Mavis Staples is that beautifully gruff female voice heard on great old The Staple Singers songs, such as "I'll Take You There." With *We'll Never Turn Back*, Staples takes listeners back to the Civil Rights Movement. It offers both a celebration of victories over racial intolerance and a current state of race relations address. During "My Own Eyes" Staples observes: "I saw New Orleans / I saw the people left for dead." Larry Norman once sang: "Sometimes I think that we've advanced ... but then I look at where we are." Similarly, Staples sees Katrina's botched relief effort as a slap in the face to progress. Even so, nothing can take away Staples' joy. Just get a listen to how producer Ry Cooder revs up "This Little Light." Put Mavis in charge of the kiddies, and Sunday School will never be the same. When Staples sings, she's like a mamma in charge, so you best listen up good.
[ANTI] DAN MACINTOSH

THE WEDDING

POLARITY

Polarity from The Wedding is truly one of the most unique albums I have heard to date. This isn't because of the bands powerful and emotional and heartfelt lyrics or the implementation of new instruments, but the change from the last album to this one. When I first heard The Wedding nearly a year ago, all I heard was loud screaming and loud music, barely able to understand the lyrics; now, as the band has matured, they, along with the talented Mark Townsend, have put together a truly eclectic hard rock album. Instruments vary from your typical guitars, basses, and drums to your not-so-typical horns and bagpipes. The tracks are very well written and composed and each one has its own meaning. Each one, too, is very different. The album as a whole gives you the hard rock feel that the band desires, but each song as an individual can be hard rock or even considered worship. The band pours their hearts out to fans on this album and truly desires to connect with them. This album is better than the last one mostly because the lyrics have matured and the singing has become more understandable. I would highly recommend this album to any fan of personal, emotional, and real music. ~~[BRAVE NEW WORLD] TIMOTHY GERST~~

JOY ELECTRIC

WORKMANSHIP

Ronnie Martin pays homage to his currently one-man-band's electronic roots on this EP between fancifully conceptual albums. In recapturing the spirit of late '70s English youth with synthesizers and a DIY ethos adopted from their country's punk explosion a couple years prior, Martin connotes nostalgic longing to technological primitivism and a wide-eyed vision of a limitless future. Elsewhere he finds inspiration in other synth forebears and the troubles of a family friend. The regularity of Joy Electric's piquantly sweet sonics sometimes makes it difficult to detect when Martin's onto fresh ideas, but his sounds and explanatory liner notes reveal that this may be a bend in the road of his long, silicone journey.
~~[VELVET BLUE] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

MARIA MCKEE

LATE DECEMBER

On her sixth solo record, Maria McKee is still experimenting with what sort of music she wants to perform; blue-eyed soul; rock opera; lilting ballads. They're all here. But the album really comes into its own when McKee covers her self penned "A Good Heart" – a chart-topper for Feargal Sharkey some 20 years ago. Overall, *Late December* is a slight departure from 2005's folksy *Peddlin'Dreams*, but fans of the Lone Justice years will be pleased, though, with "Too Many Heroes," where McKee almost captures the innocent passion of those early days.
~~[COOKING VINYL] DOUG GIESBRECHT~~

COMEBACK KID

BROADCASTING...

There are not many funner bands than Comeback Kid in the modern hardcore category (Rise Against comes to mind), because they get so busy with the shout-along/chant-along gang choruses and utilize just enough staccato in the phrasing that everyone has to show the back of their throat (what's that little wiggly thing inside – the epiglottis?) to anyone willing to look. Don't go to one of their shows when you or someone else up front is sick, because odds are you'll swallow large quantities of several others' phlegm. That infectious quality found on *Turn It Around* is still here. It's just the songs are a little longer, the guitar phrasing is a little more metal, and the production is a little richer. CBK has never been about Christian cheerleading, and that's no different here. The lyrics are left open to interpretation. It'll be up for you to decide if "In/Tuition" is about a life of faith or not. Even if this gang doesn't require an allegiance to a creed, I'm wanting in. These tunes are too much fun to ignore. ~~[VICTORY] DOUG VAN PELT~~

WAKING ASHLAND

THE WELL

Waking Ashland's back, with a re-shuffled lineup and a new label home. While their debut, *Composure*, had a comparable sound to popular acts like Something Corporate or Ben Folds, *The Well* features quite a variety of piano-based rock. This should prove to attract a broader listening demographic. Singer/keyboardist Jonathan Jones wears his Elton John and Billy Joel influences on his sleeve in the ballad "Mark Like Mine" and the bouncing "Salt Like Jam," while other tracks, such as "Your Intentions" and "Change," stick to a more modern, driving pop sound. A personal favorite is the impossibly fun "Money." While this new effort might lack some of the instant emo-pop appeal of Waking Ashland's debut, those with some patience will be rewarded, as this disc gets deeper and better after repeated spins. This is an album soccer moms and "generation myspace" might just be able to enjoy equally, which is no small feat. ~~[IMMORTAL] TIM HALLILA~~

XDEATHSTARX

WE ARE THE THREAT

I can't help it. My love for metal makes me partially blind to idiosyncrasies and critical analysis of originality. If a band can take the power riffage of Biohazard, Sinai Beach, Hatebreed, or any speed metal champs of the 80s and make it sound furious, real, and passionate, I'm hooked. It's like an addiction, I suppose. My loyalty to head-knocking melodies, hooks, break-downs and shout-along choruses are enough to make me want to forget that anyone else can see me screaming along in the car or hardcore dancing in the pit. What's excellent and noteworthy about this band is how three vocalists (Eric Gregson, Ryan Bermuda, and Jason Keller) can bring it as a cohesive unit, backing and countering lines with cupfulls of flying spit. ~~[FACEDOWN] DOUG VAN PELT~~

TOM WAITS

ORPHANS: BRAWLERS, BAWLERS, AND BASTARDS

A musician like Tom Waits has always been the most consistent in his inconsistency. That is to say, his latter day albums work best when he is transitioning between industrial blues rockers, barrelhouse sing-alongs, and barroom weepers. For this three-CD collection, Waits separates each of those styles onto each disc, which makes for a rather trying experience. When sitting through the *Brawlers* disc, the constant barrage of growling, processed vocals and clanking percussion becomes almost too much to bear, leaving the listener clamoring for a reprieve of some kind. It also becomes quickly apparent (particularly on *Bastards*, the weakest disc of the bunch) that this collection is a dumping ground for Waits' D-List material. For every solid cut, like his ridiculously funny cover of the *Snow White* anthem "Heigh Ho" and the rockabilly squall of "Lie to Me," there are half a dozen head scratch worthy exercises in muffled storytelling and ham-fisted production (such as the many spoken word interludes that crop up between songs on *Bastards*). Elsewhere, the discs end up sounding like "Tom Waits by the numbers" and have none of the charm, warmth, or surprises that Waits has exhibited on recent discs like *Mule Variations* and *Blood Money*. Most multi-disc sets like this are really for the diehard fan and, even then, still begs the question of whether the listener can end up with too much of a good thing. Unfortunately, the answer with this collection is a resounding, "Yes." ~~[ANTI-] BOB HAM~~

DEAS VAIL

ALL THE HOUSES LOOK THE SAME

This is indie rock at its most beautiful. Deas Vail's debut, *All the Houses Look the Same,* is a gorgeous, melodic ride through swirling rhythms, keyboards and guitars. This young band has a very unique and original sound, accentuated by the clean, airy, almost angelic pop vocals of lead singer Wes Blaylock over pianos and guitars. Fans of Coldplay and Mae sit up and take notice, but this group is not ripping off any one sound. From melodic euro pop to indie rock and emo to classical influences, the music will lift you off the ground onto a cloud and carry you away on the amazing melodies. Standout tracks are the 80's influenced "Anything You Say" and the hook-filled single "Rewind" with its intelligent and poetic lyrics wrapped around a perfect sonic landscape. This is the sound that will make Deas Vail one of the best new artists of the year. ~~[BRAVE NEW WORLD] DR. TONY SHORE~~

CHEVELLE

VENA SERA

As a band grows old, as Chevelle has done (it's hard to believe this is their fourth studio album already), they have to steer clear of the waters marked "stagnant." They can go the way of re-invention or they can hone their sound so well that it rallies an audience around a "signature" sound. While Chevelle's output isn't necessarily entirely original, their shivering metallic Tool-ish riffs are so steady, heavy, powerful and distinctly identifiable that it compels its audience to come hither. They've pulled off what only a few bands (AC/DC and the Stones come to mind) that can release various chapters of the same album, as it were. This current season of their career will probably be looked at in hindsight as their best or "most productive" period. They deliver the goods with no apologies and with top-notch melodies and production. Highlights here include "Well Enough Alone," which starts off with Pete Loeffler taking a deep breath and then launching into a heckuva 12-second scream. Once perceived as one of the lone sans-profanity bands at Ozzfest a few years ago, "Humanoid" abandons that characteristic in favor of a colorful metaphor for cow dung. If they ever do go through that "experimental" phase, they'll have certainly earned the credibility for their audience to give it a chance. ~~[EPIC] DOUG VAN PELT~~

NEAL MORSE

SOLA SCRIPTURA

This album is big. Musically it is the best thing that Neal Morse has ever recorded, and that's saying something, considering his output with Transatlantic, Spock's Beard and his previous solo work. Prog rock hasn't sounded this good in a long time. Fans of Dream Theater, Rush and Yes will be in art rock heaven. I've always enjoyed Neal's albums and I think they've improved every time, but this one really stands above the others. *Sola Scriptura* is epic on a grand scale, with only 4 tracks, including the mind-numbing opener "The Door," which is almost 30 minutes long. If you're not into amazingly complex orchestration, guitar riffs, keyboard and drum solos, well, you still need to give this a shot, prog rock usually isn't this good. This album is musical and epic without being weary or redundant. As usual, Neal has enlisted an A-list cast of musicians to help him out, with Mike Portnoy of Dream Theater on drums and guitar guru Paul Gilbert ripping some mean solos. The real standout on this one, though, is bassist Randy George (Ajalon). I have always known he was a talent, but he's never been showcased on an album like this or sounded this good. Neal's keyboards, guitars and vocals are as agile and freakishly great as always. Too bad the same cannot be said about the lyrics. Putting aside the fact that many consider Sola Scriptura (the Word alone) to be bad theology, lyrically this one just comes off as a rant against the Catholic Church. I am not Catholic, but I also don't think it's a good idea to base an entire album concept around this anti-church theology. What's next, a concept album called *Predestination*? Whether you agree with the theology or not, it comes across as an attempt to be controversial. But I know Neal, he's a passionate guy with a passionate faith and he makes great music. Give it a listen … Sola Musica. ~~[RADIANT] DR. TONY SHORE~~

DAPHNE LOVES DERBY

GOOD NIGHT, WITNESS LIGHT

If you met *Good Night, Witness Light* in human form, he would be the nice enough boyfriend that your daughter brought home. His demeanor calm and mannerly, his personality pleasant. But if your daughter brought several guys home, you wouldn't remember the decent one above the others. That's the problem that Daphne Loves Derby has on their hands. The darlings of the musical web took PureVolume by storm with their debut full-length, *On The Strength Of All Convinced*, garnering 4 million plays and outranking established, signed artists. But it seems that signing with indie start-up Outlook Records allowed them to coast through the recording sessions. This is surprising on an album produced by Matt Squire (Panic! At The Disco, Thrice), but only a few of the thirteen tracks stand out. "Cue The Sun!" acoustically refreshes while "How's It Going To End?" ascends into slightly epic territory. But the rest of *Good Night* is awash in Jimmy Eat World outtakes or Copeland B-Sides that are really fine songs that simply sound like each other. Likable? Sure. Memorable? Hardly. ~~[OUTLOOK] MATT CONNER~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Tom Waits *Orphans: Brawlers, Bawlers, and Bastards*	03	02
Deas Vail *All The Houses Look The Same*	03	03*
Chevelle *Vena Sera*	02*	
Neal Morse *Sola Scriptura*	03	03*
Daphne Loves Derby *Good Night, Witness Light*	02*	02*

ADVERTISEMENT

Roll & Rock

observations of a creative miscreant

R is also for "Remarkable". Greetings! It's been a long time since I have had the honor of gracing the pages of HM. For those of you dinosaurs who may remember when this mag was called "Heaven's Metal", I wrote a column in the early 90's called "Inside Out" where we followed the tragically humorous adventures of a fictitious metal band called "Tortured Virtue". At that time, I was the bassist for a band called Guardian—who were enjoying some mid-level popularity back then. The trials and tribulations encountered by Tortured Virtue closely mirrored my experiences in the music business as an artist—replete with a prevailing mistrust of record companies and all things musically corporate. Ironically, I ended up working as a record company executive for the next 10 years so you could say I definitely know both sides of the fence. (Yeah...I know—What a sellout!)

So where do stand things today for the new "Tortured Virtue's" of the world? The record biz is in great upheaval and disarray. Labels are seriously chewing it. The Big Question: Is it time to pack up your gear and sell insurance? The Big Answer: Nope! Things are changing but the future is bright.

The secret in today's market is figuring out how to be remarkable. The biggest challenge for emerging artists is cutting a wake thru the sea of zillions of plastic discs packed inside plastic cases, sitting in plastic bins, inside of plastic stores. OK, maybe that's one plastic too many, but you get the point.

When I say remarkable—I don't mean it the way your mom did when you brought home your finger-painting in first grade (Is it a cow, Honey? No, Mommy, it's a house!) I mean remarkable in the true sense of the word—worthy of being remarked about—worthy of someone saying, "Hey, check this band out" Yes, that's right—the elusive "word of mouth". It's still the only thing that matters and still the hardest thing to earn. Let's face it; all modern marketing techniques that worked even a few years ago nowadays fail miserably. We're all numb to it. Nobody reacts to hype advertising anymore. It's all become noise in our bombarded modern media culture. There's a huge difference between Hype and Buzz. Hype is purchased but Buzz is earned. One is a joke that fades quickly and the other spans long careers.

So...what makes a band remarkable? The same things that have always worked. Originality, excellence and that freakish certain something that makes people want to listen to your music and tell others about it. The music business has changed in a lot of ways but it's still essentially the same: Make music that people like and they'll come to your shows, buy your swag and maybe even buy your records. More on record sales and the impending death of the CD in my next post.

One final boast in parting. It was in this very magazine, back in the early 90's, that I predicted that the day would come when you'd be able to buy music digitally over a thing called the Internet. Boy, was I smart. Guess I should have bought more stock in Apple. Oh, well.

DAVID BACH

Email Me

MY FAVORITE BLOGS

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- A Whole New Mind
- Run With God
- The Secret Diary Of Steve Jobs
- Creating Passionate Users
- Coudal Partners
- Bob Lefsetz
- Malcolm Gladwell
- Cole 13
- Freaky Kids
- Daring Fireball
- Adgoodness
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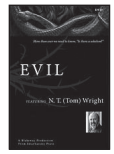
01 LADY IN THE WATER
WARNER BROS.

Granted, this movie and this story moves along at a glacier's pace, but it is also steeped in rich allegory of the spiritual nature. A messenger from a race that wants to set humans free is named (guess what) Story. She appears in the swimming pool of an apartment complex that's managed by a regular guy named Cleveland Heep (played brilliantly and vulnerably by Paul Giamatti), who's trying to suppress devastating personal loss and tragedy. Story reveals the hidden drama that unfolds behind their everyday life and yet holds grave and profound consequences for their world. There's the very real warfare with carnivorous creatures bent on their destruction. Story affirms handyman's purpose, as well as the community that develops and deepens between the locals – each using their unique gifts to bring resolution to the problem. One poignant question is asked in passing that's worth pondering: "Does man deserve to be saved, Mr. Heep?" There's many signs and hints of other topics, too. The name of the complex, for example, is called "The Cove," but the "C" in cove could easily pass for an "L," which underscores one of the key traits that helps the group and all mankind out of its dilemma. It all stems from a bedtime story that M. Night Shyamalan told his children over the years. He makes a fairly significant cameo in the film, too. This is one of those times where the DVD format and bonus materials come in handy, helping explain and give more context to this strange, sometimes witty and ironic tale. *Doug Van Pelt*

02 DANIELSON: A FAMILY MOVIE *IMAGE*
Daniel Smith leads his family to indie-rock stardom, but struggles with his pursuit of becoming a solo artist. This wonderful rock-umentary also features the rise of Sufjan to his perch atop the indie-rock mountain. Insightful interviews give light to the question of faith in the music biz. *Doug Giesbrecht*

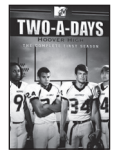


03 EVIL *IVP CONNECT*
A documentary/companion piece to N.T. (Tom) Wright's book, *Evil and the Justice of God*, the author tackles the troubling subject of evil through a biblical lens. Disaster and crime footage offer a visual of evil, while coverage of S. Africa's Truth & Reconciliation Commission show forgiveness at work. *DV*

04 STRANGER THAN FICTION *FOX VIDEO*
This wildly funny concept comes to life with great acting (Will Farrell, Emma Thompson, Dustin Hoffman, and Maggie Gyllenhaal all put in great performances). With many Farrell-induced laughs along the way, this story soon becomes a most charming romantic tale. *DV*

05 FACING THE GIANTS *PROVIDENT FILMS*
The acting here is not good, but somehow the production techniques and even the predictable story elevates this movie to an inspiring height. It helps when the subject matter is so straight-up about very crucial things, like the recurring theme of surrendering hopes, dreams and ambitions to the Lord. Good job. *DV*

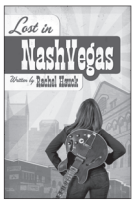
06 THE NATIVITY STORY *NEW LINE*
Some may consider this a prequel to other popular renditions of the Jesus story, as it delves a bit deeper into the relationship between Joseph and Mary. It's a mostly biblically accurate telling of young love, misunderstood circumstances and the stress that comes out of that. *DG*



07 TWO-A-DAYS *PARAMOUNT*
Even after the success of *Varsity Blues*, it's easy to doubt MTV's ability to offer good entertainment. This is a good example at the progress reality programming has made, which comes off about as smooth as a screen play. The hitting is great, you'll hate the coach, and all the teenage drama is passable. *DV*

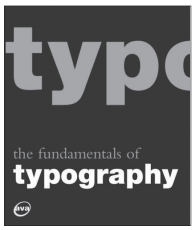
08 AMERICAN HARDCORE *SPHE*
The study of this modern day musical movement is a fascinating thing. Based upon the book of the same name, this film shows lots of historical footage from the early 80s. A refreshing, unflinching look at an underground movement's humble roots, DIY ethos, and even its violent tendencies. *DV*

	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
SPIRITUAL RELEVANCY (%)	100	100	100	90	100	100	30	50
OBSCENITIES	1	2		7			18	113
SCENES OF GORE						2		
NUDITY / SEXUALITY								



Lost in NashVegas
Rachel Hauck – WestBow

This book was so much fun to read. Author Rachel Hauck really did her homework, because the main character – Robin McAfee, a talented singer/songwriter from Freedom, Alabama that ventures to Nashville to make her fame and fortune – fits the part so well, getting a quick education in songwriting, publishing, pitching songs, and the whole close-knit network that churns out the hits. Many of the beloved landmarks in Nashville are backdrop to the sometimes political and heart-breaking business dealings in this synergistic city. Besides having that special knack for singing stories, McAfee has one major flaw: stage fright. It's fun to see how this inherent tension escorts the story through its breaks and setbacks. While written with a Christian worldview, McAfee is believable and completely down-to-earth. I can't decide which aspect I enjoyed more: seeing the sometimes seedy underbelly of Nashville's music business; or watching this character overcome her obstacles as she chases her dream and tries to cultivate a lovelife. One of the few small details that was cool to see was the notepad of song ideas always kept nearby. *DVP*



The Fundamentals of Typography
Gavin Ambrose & Paul Harris – Ava

You know you're a design geek when you can name a font that you see in an elevator ... or you actually pay attention to how the credits at the end of a movie are laid out. Whether you're a pro employed at an ad agency or a friend helping a band design its album cover, anyone involved in graphic design should know what they're dealing with when it comes to type. Before taking a college course, the designer could learn a lot from reading this book. Sure, there's ideas for the hungry designer looking for inspiration; but the real gift a book like this brings is it teaches you to think about type and its relation to design. You'll pick up things that you'll never forget – like "read direction," the power of "serifs," and dozens of small details yet hugely significant factors in effective design. It'll educate you with a little art and typography history, but ultimately show you how much thought goes into all the text you see around you. *DVP*

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Gadgets
Logi-Tech, Griffin, Oppo Digital, & Sennheiser

(01) Logi-Tech's **G25 Steering Wheel** ($299) is for top-o-the-line PC gaming. Compatable w/PS2, it's decked out in metal and leather, featuring a 6-gear shifter, a full clutch/brake/gas panel for the floor, and intense vibration and touch. Griffin keeps rolling out cool iPod attachments: (02) The **iTalk Pro** ($49) fits right into the dock connection and records stereo audio in quality levels – a true advancement; (03) the **Centerstage** ($29) is a hard plastic shell casing that allows for drop impact and features a swingout aluminum stand, facing the display right at you on nightstand or desk. Simple, yet very practical. (04) OPPO's **DV-981 HD Up-Converting Universal DVD Player** ($229) shows dvd players catching up w/ HD TV's capabilities. It's able to toggle between 480, 720 and 1080 clarity, mirroring the bright and crisp pictures you noticed the first time you upgraded from VHS to DVD. The difference is subtle, but serious. (05) Sennheiser's **OMX 90 Headphones** ($89) stay comfortably on during casual work or extreme activity, and feature a cool, lightweight volume control. *DV*

[logitech.com, griffin.com, oppodigital.com, sennheiserusa.com]

The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

The Disconnect: Why Evangelicals Make Bad Art (Part the Fifth)

In the last issue, we continued to explore the question of why, in an America in which betwixt one-fourth and one-fifth of the population reportedly profess to be Evangelical Christians, there is a paucity of quality art created by Christians (in music, dance, television, film, etc.). We saw that, though Evangelicals claim to know and love the Creator of all beauty, and to be directed in "every good work" (2 Timothy 3: 16-17) by the Word of that Creator, their communal failure to produce quality art for the Church and the world is a result of their lack of knowledge and understanding of the Bible. Two reasons were put forward for this lack of knowledge: laziness and bad theology, the first of which we saw as primarily related to a self-idolatry which manifests itself in a pursuit of pleasure (personal peace and affluence) which has displaced love and obedience to God's Will and Purposes.

The second reason, bad theology, we saw as being partially the result of jettisoning the ethical demands of Scripture in favor of seeking an emotional experience instead. Because deep knowledge of the Bible isn't necessary to seek a feel-good experience of God, study of Scripture has radically fallen off amongst Evangelicals, as Holy Writ has increasingly ceased to be viewed as the Heavenly Blueprint of God's Patterns for men's lives.

Such a view, married to a primary pursuit of pleasure, limits a Christian to surface (and frequently erroneous) views of Scripture's teaching. The upshot of all this mindset is that the Evangelical Church (which has been affected on many levels by this viewpoint) has lost the ability to see the world (and ourselves) Biblically, as we actually are.

By forfeiting the Biblical view of Reality, the Church is left with either an unrealistic, distorted, pseudo-Scriptural picture of the world, or a perverted, radically illusory concept of the universe which is drawn from both the world-system and the darkened rebellion dwelling in the hearts of men (Romans 1: 18-32). Amongst most of us, a combination of the two prevails.

This flawed perspective is controlling the way that much of the Church in the West views God, ourselves, and our mission and callings in the world today. This perspective is also why the Western Church is failing at its God-given task in America.

Since the Church doesn't see the world, God, and ourselves correctly, we have not been able to properly minister as an entity in most spheres of our callings. Our unBiblical worldview has distorted and crippled our anthropology, cosmology, even our sociological understandings, so that our evangelism and discipleship, and even our cultural callings, suffer.

These last, our cultural callings, include the efforts of Christian artists to produce quality art in accordance with Jesus' Will for those called by Him to do so. Christians called to be artists are massively hampered in attempts to fulfill their responsibility to produce quality art by an unBiblical view of Reality, since the production of quality art depends radically upon a deep and accurate understanding of the world in order to express in artistic form a Biblically particularized version of human experience of God's Created Reality (e.g., an artistic expression based upon a true understanding of the world).

A shallow or distorted view of God, mankind, and Reality itself guarantees a shallow, distorted expression of art, since what is produced as art depends on the artist's depth of accurate apprehension of Creation. Such inferior artistic expressions are rightly viewed by both Christians and non-Christians as irrelevant, or as sheer wish-fulfillment on the part of the Christian artist, or as simplistic propaganda, none of which responsibly reflect the Creative Depth and Beauty of God and His Creation. If the artistic expression fails to accurately reflect Reality, whyever would anyone, believer or non-believer, take its implications or conclusions seriously?

Only the Bible, infallibly inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 2:19-21) gives us an objective and unFallen view of the world to counter our radically subjective and sin-darkened understandings. This is why it is crucial that the Christian artist truly know, deeply and receptively, the Word of God. The artistic distortions which result from failure to know Scripture are legion, leading to a number of anti-Biblical expressions, to some of which, God willing, we will turn in the next issue.

[kempercrabb.net]

The way I see it
Chris Wighaman

TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

I grew up in the Chicago area when the Chicago Bulls were not just good, but great. MJ was insanely popular, they won 6 championships, and everyone in America loved them, well at least that was our perspective. During their run they began to feed the hype surrounding them. They started doing this whole intro, which as a fan was a must to tune in early to catch. The lights would go out in the whole building, this twilight-zone-type music started playing and the announcer yelled "AAAAAAANNND NOW THE STARTING LINEUP FOR YOUR CHICAGO BULLS …" The crowd went ballistic, people at home knew it was game time, the players were into it – and it culminated with the announcement of the starting Shooting Guard – it was quite the entrance. [It still gives me goose-bumps just thinking about it.]

In John 12 we see Jesus making an entrance into the city of Jerusalem. It's often called "the triumphal entry," because Jesus is riding on this donkey while a crowd of people wave branches and throw down their coats in front of Him shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel!" The people were excited about this Jesus they had seen and heard of and began celebrating his coming to the cultural center of Israel – even proclaiming Him King. They knew they were witnessing something important and that it would change the world as they knew it. The problem is they had the completely wrong expectations. They thought His entrance was the beginning of Jesus leading a revolution (and) setting up an earthly kingdom where they would be out from under the rule of the Romans and would become a national power again. Even in His last few days Jesus' disciples argued who would have the positions of power in this new kingdom. Jesus talked a lot about The Kingdom of God, so you could almost understand their confusion. What was beyond their understanding was that Jesus was indeed setting up the Kingdom of God, however this Kingdom was not to be bound by national lines, language, race, or history. His grand entrance into Jerusalem brought a revolution of the soul. God, through the obedience of Jesus, brings about restoration to all His people not just a select few. God is seeking to transform His people and through that bring about The Kingdom of God on earth even now. We sometimes expect Christ's grand entrance in our lives to immediately fix everything in our "kingdom." The expectation is that we will be free from the consequences of our sin and the burdens of living in a sinful world. While God wants to restore all His creation in every way, it begins with us as individuals first and then flows out into all the avenues of our lives. When we are looking for the Kingdom of God we must first look to our own lives and whether He is Lord there, and as we gather with others who are on this same path of seeking God we can see the Kingdom as Christ intended it.

Devotions with Greg Tucker

"My Father will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth."
–Words of Jesus, John 14:16-17

I'm a gadget guy. If something is cool I have one, and if it's really cool I have three. Other people return from shopping with their purchase stored safely in the trunk, but in my case it's sitting next to me where I can see it at all times. At the first red light I'll pull it out to study the box in detail … again. Give me a long light or a train and I'll rip off the plastic every time.

If that sounds familiar, or if you also like having the latest stuff, then you're probably a gadget person, too. In my humble opinion, it's about as close to sainthood as you can get. Remember, even Jesus was riding a donkey while everyone else was walking.

Recently I shelled out money for a GPS, which turned out to be a particularly good buy. Though pricy, the Garmin product mounts in my car window and can readily announce where I am on the planet at all times, accurate to within four feet. Input an address and a pleasant voice labeled "Jill" tells me how to get to my destination. Those things are key to any trip – knowing where you are and where you're headed, but they're not enough to get you there. You still need information along the way.

Recently I put my GPS to the ultimate test on a 5,000-mile road trip. From our home in Southern California I punched in an address in Gahanna, Ohio, and in minutes it had calculated the best route. My job was simply to follow instructions, and every time I veered from the prescribed course – maybe to hit a Dairy Queen or see the World's Largest Ball of Yarn – Jill would gently say, "Recalculating…," then find the quickest way to get me back on track.

When you accepted Jesus as Lord your destination was determined. Eternally I'm referring to heaven, but even in this life you have a goal to grow in Christlikeness. Sometimes we don't know how to get there. Sometimes we wander off the road accidentally, or we take major detours that are neither accidental nor wise.

Like I said, if something is cool I have one, and if it's really cool I have three, and that's even true spiritually. Not only do we have a relationship with a Living God who has us where we are, but also with his Son, who has sealed where we're going. And if that weren't enough, He's further given the gift of His very presence – we call Him the Holy Spirit – to guide us along the way. The moment we stray off course, if we listen we can almost hear him say "Recalculating" as He works to direct us back onto the path of life.

[Greg Tucker lives in your computer at HopeCCA.com]

PICK OF THE LITTER

Dave Beegle

When it comes to musical prowess, it's hard not to be blown away when you hear and see Dave Beegle play guitar. His playing of Zeppelin's "The Rain Song" on a Transperformance promo video made Jimmy Page an admirer. *Acoustic Mayhem: Live At The Rialto Featuring The Dave Beegle Acoustic Band* comes in two formats: CD, with a full 78 minutes of acoustic jamming; and DVD, showing the same performance with multiple camera angles and (the best part) an optional 5.1 Surround Sound mix. This is a really good snapshot of the greatness that resides in this guy's fingers. It's like he's got 11 or 12 digits, because he's so fast and yet so expressive. And it doesn't hurt that he partners himself with some great players, too. The DVD also comes with a couple of bonuses: some soundcheck snippets and an honest-to-goodness guitar lesson with split screens to carefully show fretting and picking hands. Besides picking leads and strumming rhythms, this guy can bend a string and hold a note just like an electric (as evident in the closer, "Kara Kum"). (Doug Van Pelt)
davebeegle.com

She Came From Above

Imagine the hardcore/metalcore of Imperial, the technical wizardry of Botch, Norma Jean + the experimental weirdness of bands as diverse as Roadside Monument and Neurosis all set to poetic and faith-filled lyrics. This creates a very interesting and entertaining brand of indie hardcore/screamo! This will be a band to watch. (Loyd Harp)
myspace.com/shecamefromabove

Alcina

Although *Of Hearts Left Unnourished* sports some of the worst snare drum sounds around, the cool and various shrill and growl screams atop the thin production match the heavy beats powerfully. The moments of old school hardcore here are quite fun. (DV)
holdfastrecords.com

Shaken

This band swings from extreme suckage to brutal intensity, with a little bit of unexpected melodic accenting (like the "kyrie liason" vocal chants in "trackthree". A couple of rough straight-up rock moments really distract from the lay-it-down jamming they can do. Maybe they've got a dad or uncle from a country band that they're trying to pay back for studio time or something, but the occasional visitation from various styles is kinda unwelcome. (DV)
myspace.com/shakencore

Distant Hero

Fast, desperate, heavy, with old school metal riffs amidst a modern alternative rock sound. Surprisingly, their newer acoustic versions on *In Stereo* from 2005's *Get To The Chopper* – "Author Of Glory" and "At Ends" – are possibly the strongest cuts. Consistently rocking out and improving their songwriting for the past couple of years. A pretty cool work in progress to hear. (DV)
myspace.com/distanthero

Candlefuse

While annoyingly "ccm-ish" at times, this band is a few grades above most with their worshipful, catchy, melodic modern rock. When they speed up to mid-tempo, they sound like early Disciple groove rock. (DV)
candlefuse.com

Suicide Of Demons

Heavy, intense hardcore for the tough guys and gals are found on this Belgian band's 3-song EP, *Reap What You Sow*. Bright, dirty guitar tones pierce through the mix and a variety of screaming vocals are fun to hear. (DV)
myspace.com/suicideofdemons

Why They Came

Even if lo-fi tunes are annoying to your ears, your mind might like to wrap around the interesting stories found on *Led By The Unqualified...* (DV)
whytheycame.com

Detachment Theory

Heavy, powerful, chugging old school punk rock here, not too unlike Offspring. The drum sonics on this 3-song EP are kinda lame, but the overall vibe is quite chipper. (DV)
detachmenttheory.com

Hollywood Black

On *Two Thousand Years Of Progress*, this band romps through an old school punk style that's parts raw and garage and parts Americana. (DV)
hollywoodblack.org

Someday

These guys ride that edge between out-of-control and melodic screamo. Treating a crushing riff with power and a tender moment with care, these guys manage that dynamic pretty well. (DV)
somedaymusic.com

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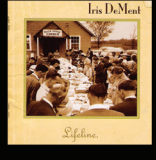

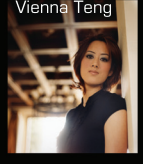

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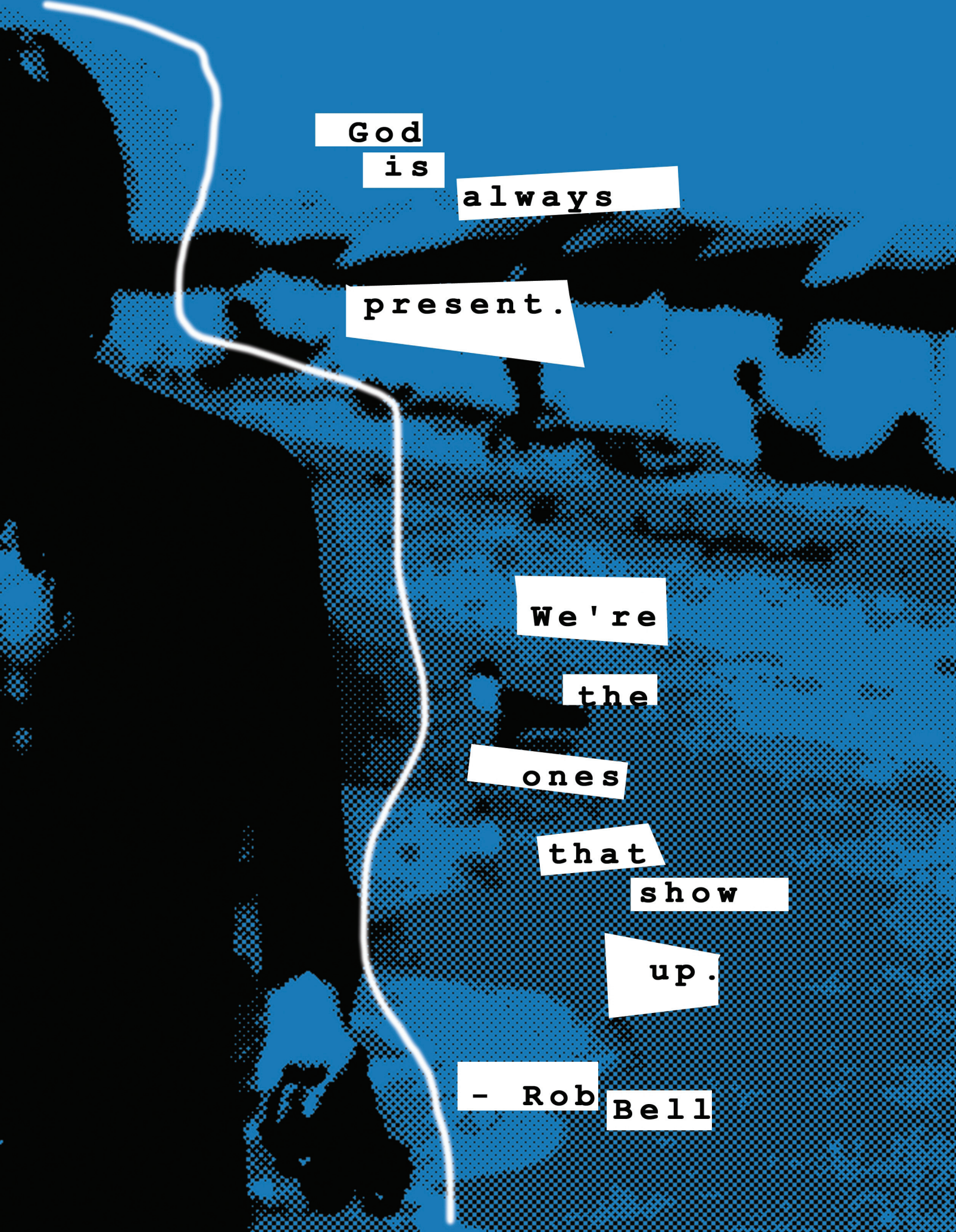
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